ORNAMENTAL IRON ARTIST

THOMAS F. GOOGERTY

FROM PONTIAC, ILLINOIS

by

Dale C. Maley

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Ornamental Iron Artist Thomas F. Googerty from Pontiac, Illinois

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Foreword

Thomas F. Googerty (1864-1945) was born and raised in Pontiac, Illinois. His father died in a tragic railroad accident when Thomas was just five years old. He quit school at the age of 13 and started working to support his widowed mother and three siblings. He then apprenticed himself to a Pontiac blacksmith. From 1880 until 1894, Thomas traveled the country working at many different blacksmithing jobs.

In 1894, Thomas accepted a job as a forging and blacksmithing instructor at the Illinois State Boys Reformatory in Pontiac, Illinois. Thomas spent decades teaching young boys to learn the trade of blacksmithing so they could be productive after they left the Reformatory.

To aid in his job as an instructor, Thomas published over 50 articles in various trade magazines. He also authored three books on ornamental iron working. His 1911 book is considered a seminal work in the art of ornamental iron and is still used by blacksmiths today. Thomas became nationally famous because of his writings, his exhibitions in the Midwest, and his inclusion in 1914 to Boston's prestigious Society of Arts and Crafts.

Some of his iron work still survives today including the iron entrance gates at Pontiac's Southside Cemetery and Saint Mary's Catholic Cemetery.

It is hoped this book will help to inform future generations about the rich history of the life of ornamental iron artist Thomas F. Googerty.

Acknowledgments

Many thanks go to the Livingston County Historical Society for allowing access to the records of the historical society.

Thanks go to Joyce Nagel and Tom Ewing, Livingston County Historical Society Board Members, for proofreading the manuscript.

Many thanks go to Judith K. Wells for proofreading the manuscript.

Thanks also go to Ron and Fawn Baker of the Livingston County Historical Society for helping to locate the Thomas F. Googerty related artifacts in inventory at the historic Jones House in Pontiac. Ron also help to review the manuscript.

Thanks also go to Dave Sullivan of the Livingston County Historical Society for providing copies of newspaper articles about Thomas F. Googerty.

CHAPTER 1

Book Design

There are four primary historical reference books used whenever research is performed about Livingston County, Illinois.

1878 History Book

The earliest published reference to Livingston County, Illinois history is William Le Baron's 1878 book titled ***The History of Livingston County, Illinois.*** This book will be called the 1878 history book in future references.

1888 History Book

The 1888 history book titled ***Portrait and Biographical Album of Livingston County*** by Chapman Brothers is the second Livingston County history book. This book will be called the 1888 history book in future references.

1900 History Book

The 1900 history book titled ***The Biographical Record of Livingston and Woodford Counties*** by S. J. Clarke is the third Livingston County history book. This book will be called the 1900 history book in future references.

1909 History Book

The 1909 history book titled ***Historical Encyclopedia of Illinois and History of Livingston County Volume Two*** by Bateman and Selby is the fourth Livingston County history book. This book will be called the 1909 history book in future references.

Other Important Historical Sources

The Fairbury Blade has now been digitized and is word searchable back to 1871. Access to the Blade archives is free and available from the Dominy Memorial Library website. There were also other newspapers published in Fairbury between its founding in 1857 and 1871. Unfortunately, no copies of these early newspapers exist.

The Pontiac Sentinel was published from 1857 until about 1900. The Pontiac Library microfilm only goes back to 1871. As of February 16, 2024, the Pontiac Library has made the 1871 to 1897 issues of the Sentinel available online to library cardholders.

The Daily Leader has been around since 1896. The Pontiac Library also has made it available online to library cardholders.

For non-members of the Pontiac Library, they can come to the library and use a designated desktop computer to search both the Sentinel and the Daily Leader free of charge.

The website GenealogyBank.com requires an annual subscription fee to access the archived articles. This website has archived copies of the Daily Leader from 1958 to 1970.

The website Ancestry.com requires an annual subscription fee to access the archived newspaper articles. This website has archived copies of the Daily Leader from 1971 to 1977.

The Bloomington Pantagraph newspaper archives are also available online and can be searched back to 1838. There is an annual subscription fee required to access these archives.

Newspapers.com is a website that contains archives of thousands of newspapers. Annual subscription fees are required to access these archives.

Google Books was also an invaluable source for old books with information about this story. NOTE: You must utilize the Google Book option to find these books. The regular Google search feature does not readily identify these old publications.

Citations

If possible, references and dates will be noted for all materials used in this book. In the event no date is available, that fact will be noted.

Sanborn Maps

The Sanborn Insurance Company periodically made maps of many small towns in Central Illinois. Sanborn maps still exist for Pontiac in the years of 1888, 1892, 1897, 1903, 1910, and 1923. Copies of these old maps are available for free from several different websites.

Newspaper Stories

All newspaper stories cited in this book will be presented in the original wording of the article. If the copy of the article had adequate quality, it may be shown as an image. If the article is of poor visual quality, it will be transcribed into text.

Pantagraph Negatives

Starting a few years ago, the Pantagraph released their old photo negatives to the McLean County Museum of History. The museum had the negatives scanned and then posted on a website where anyone can access them for free. Negatives from the Pontiac area can be accessed at https://tinyurl.com/37x62cvx. Negatives that were used in this book will be referred to as "Pantagraph negatives."

Archive.Org

Most of the rare documents discovered in researching this book have been uploaded to Archive.Org. Hopefully, this website will survive for many years in the future, and future researchers can easily find this material. A PDF copy of this book will also be uploaded to Archive.Org.

1999 Googerty Exhibit at Memphis Museum

In 1999, the National Ornamental Metal Museum in Memphis held an exhibit titled ***Forging Character, Forging Iron: The Work of Thomas F. Googerty***. Mr. Howard S. Miller wrote and published a 39 page pamphlet about this exhibit. Materials that were used in this book will be referred to as "The 1999 Googerty Memphis Exhibit Pamphlet." This museum was later renamed to the Metal Museum.

Book Font

This book is written in Times New Roman with a 12 point font size. This relatively large font size makes all parts of the book easy to read.

Chronological Chapters

This book is designed in chronological order to make it easier to follow the story of Thomas F. Googerty and his family.

CHAPTER 2

The Googerty Family Were Early Citizens of Pontiac, Illinois

One of the first steps in writing a book is to determine the genealogy of the family. Usually, Ancestry.com is very helpful in tracing the family back to Europe. Unfortunately, difficulty was encountered in identifying the father of Thomas F. Googerty.

Fortunately, the 1909 Volume II history book contains two references to the Googerty family. The first reference is excerpted and is shown below:

> Before the railroad came, the settlers in and around Pontiac were natives of the eastern states, the majority of them being from the states of New York, Ohio and Indiana, but with the railroad came a new class of citizens, most of whom were Irish, who were arriving in this country then in large numbers from their native land.
>
> Among those who arrived about this time and a little later were William Cleary, who worked on the railroad, but afterwards became interested in the first coal mine sunk in Pontiac. Luke Jordan and family, who lived In town for three years, removing to a farm just west of the city where he now resides; William Googerty, Sr., and his son, William, Jr.. who were for many years contractors for supplying the new railroad with wood and water.
>
> William Googerty, Sr., first came to Pontiac about 1850. About the time the railroad came through he returned to Elgin and induced his son and wife to accompany him to Pontiac, which they did. William Googerty and son are long since dead, the latter being killed by the cars near where the widow and her two sons, Thomas and Andrew, now reside.

Comments Regarding This First Mention of the Googerty Family in the 1909 History Book

So there were at least three generations that used the first name of William in this Googerty family. To clarify which generation of William is used in this book, the birth and death dates will be added behind each name.

The above reference also establishes that the Googerty family were among some of the early families to live in Pontiac, since William Googerty (1800-1873) came from Elgin, Illinois, to Pontiac in 1850.

William Googerty (1829-1865) was also killed in some type of train car accident in Pontiac. His widow, mother of Thomas F. Googerty, continued to live in the family home near the railroad tracks in Pontiac.

Second Mention of Googerty Family in 1909 Volume II History Book

> When the Chicago, Alton and St Louis Railroad entered Pontiac in July, 1854, the little hamlet was made a wooding station for the engines, and remained so until coal was brought into general use for this purpose along in the late '60s.
>
> Thus, for over ten years, every engine along the line of the road between Chicago and St. Louis would stop at Pontiac for wood, all cut from the banks of the Vermilion near the line of the road.
>
> A large wood shed was erected by the company along the tracks of the road between Livingston and Prairie streets for this purpose, where the farmers would bring in their four-foot wood and throw it into the shed to be cut up Into one and one-third lengths ready for the fire box.
>
> William Googerty and his son, William Googerty, Jr., were the contractors to supply the road with wood at this point, and they held it as long as wood was used for fuel. While it lasted, it was the only "industry" in the hamlet at the time.
>
> Two band saws, run by horse-power, were kept running almost constantly night and day, and it was the means of giving many people employment, which in those days was hard to find.

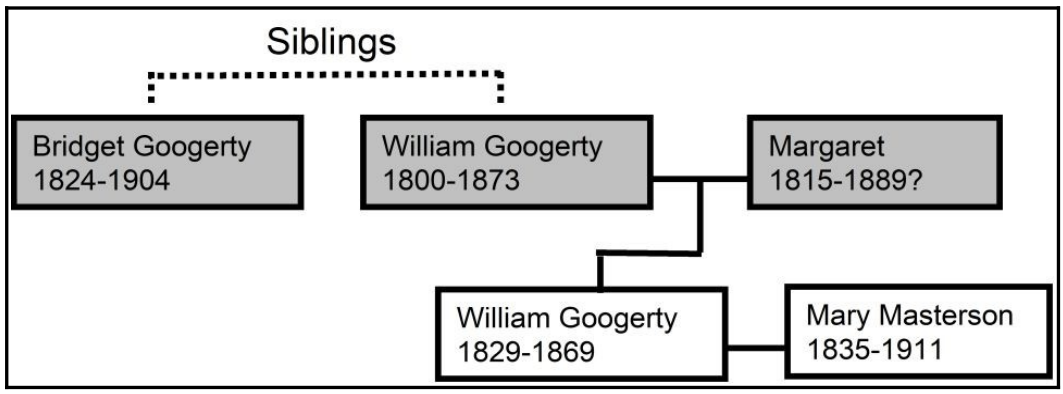
Comments Regarding This Second Mention of the Googerty Family in the 1909 History Book

This excerpt establishes that William Googerty (1800-1873) and his son William Googerty (1829-1865) established one of the first businesses in Pontiac. This business also provided some cash income for the farmers that brought in some of their wood to sell to the business.

CHAPTER 3

Googerty Family Tree

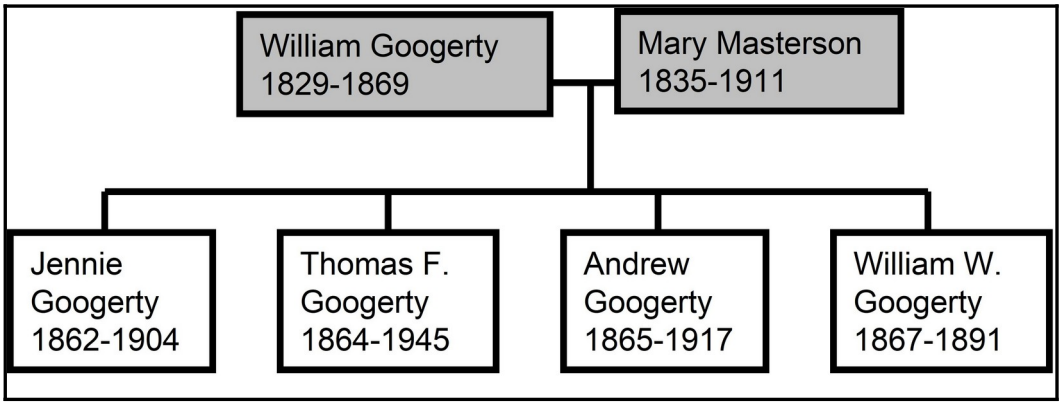
Using information from several sources, including the 1909 Volume II history book and Ancestry.com, the Googerty family tree is shown below.



Most gravestones have the names of the husband and the wife. That is not the case for William Googerty (1800-1873). His gravestone, in Saint Mary's Cemetery (the Pontiac Catholic Cemetery) has his name and his sister's name, Bridget Googerty. It does not have the name of his wife, Margaret.

The surname of Margaret, wife of Thomas Googerty (1800-1873), could not be determined at this time. No death notice or obituary could be found for Margaret. There are Pontiac newspaper records of her paying property taxes for a lot or house in the Fell Addition in Pontiac in 1889. That year is the last mention of her name in the Pontiac newspapers.

Next Level of Googerty Family Tree



Comments on the Next Level of the Googerty Family Tree

William and Mary Googerty had four children. None of these four children ever married.

Jennie Googerty was only 42 years of age when she died. Andrew and William Googerty both took jobs working on railroad mail cars of the Alton Railroad that ran through Pontiac. Unfortunately, William W. Googerty (1867-1891) died of consumption when he was only 24 years of age. The modern name of consumption is tuberculosis and there was no cure for that disease in 1891.

Andrew Googerty worked on the mail cars of the Alton Railroad for all of his working career. He died in 1917 at the age of 52.

Thomas F. Googerty, who became a nationally known ornamental iron artist, lived the longest of the four children. He died in 1945 at the age 80.

Records indicate that almost all of this Googerty family was buried in Saint Mary's Cemetery in Pontiac. The only marked grave is for William and Bridget Googerty as noted above.

It is interested to note how closely related this family was to the Alton Railroad in Pontiac:

1. William Googerty (1800-1873) set up one of the first businesses in Pontiac which supplied wood for the steam locomotives on the railroad.
2. William Googerty (1829-1869) joined his father in the wood business in Pontiac. He was killed in some type of railroad accident around 1869.
3. One of the Googerty houses was located next to the Alton Railroad.
4. Both Andrew and William W. Googerty worked on the mail cars of the Alton Railroad.

CHAPTER 4

History of Blacksmithing

According to Wikipedia, a blacksmith is a metalsmith who creates objects primarily from wrought iron or steel, but sometimes from other metals, by forging the metal, using tools to hammer, bend, and cut.

Blacksmiths produce objects such as gates, grilles, railings, light fixtures, furniture, sculpture, tools, agricultural implements, decorative and religious items, cooking utensils, and weapons. The place where the blacksmith works is variously called a smithy, a forge, or a blacksmith's shop.

While there are many professions who work with metal, such as farriers, wheelwrights, and armorers, in former times the blacksmith had a general knowledge of how to make and repair many things, from the most complex of weapons and armor to simple things like nails or lengths of chain.

In America, blacksmiths were needed to provide the iron shoes that were nailed onto the bottom of the feet of horses. These iron horse shoes allowed the horses to walk on rough ground, or stone roads, while pulling heavy loads.

In the 1900 U.S. Census, there were tens of thousands of men who were employed as blacksmiths. The death knell of the blacksmith trade was marked by the invention of Henry Ford's Model T in 1908. By 1920, most city residents had traded in their horses for automobiles. It took longer for horses to be replaced on farms by internal combustion engine tractors. Most horses were phased out of farm work by about 1950.

Thomas Googerty likely started learning the blacksmith trade around 1880 when he was 16 years of age. The "Golden Age" of blacksmiths in American was in full force when Thomas Googerty first started blacksmithing.

The first major decline in the need for blacksmiths started in 1908 with the Model T, when Thomas was 44 years of age. The need for blacksmiths continued to decline as tractors replaced horses on the farm. By 1945 when Thomas Googerty died, a majority of the horses on farms had been replaced by tractors.

According to the website, Zippia.com, there were a total of 616 blacksmiths employed in America in 2024. The link to this website is https://tinyurl.com/37z79j5s.

CHAPTER 5

Arts & Crafts Movement

The Industrial Revolution

As technologies improved after the invention of the steam engine, this lead to a dramatic change in how products were manufactured.

According to Britannica, the main features involved in the Industrial Revolution were technological, socioeconomic, and cultural. The technological changes included the following:

1. The use of new basic materials, chiefly iron and steel.

2. The use of new energy sources, including both fuels and motive power, such as coal, the steam engine, electricity, petroleum, and the internal combustion engine.

3. The invention of new machines, such as the spinning jenny and the power loom that permitted increased production with a smaller expenditure of human energy.

4. A new organization of work known as the factory system, which entailed increased division or labor and specialization of function.

5. Important developments in transportation and communication, including the steam locomotive, steamship, automobile, airplane, telegraph, and radio.

6. The increasing application of science to industry. These technological changes made possible a tremendously increased use of natural resources and the mass production of manufactured goods.

Because of the Industrial Revolution, goods became more widely available to purchase and the cost to make goods was dramatically reduced. Unfortunately, the focus of manufacturing industries was on increased production levels and not on product quality.

The Arts & Crafts Movement

Many wealthier American consumers began to desire to purchase goods that were higher quality than mass produced products. The general perception of consumers was that hand-made items were much better than the low quality mass-produced goods.

This desire for higher quality hand-made products created the Arts & Crafts Movement from about 1890 until 1910. Many small companies began to design and manufacture these types of items.

The first American Arts and Crafts Exhibition began on 5 April 1897, at Copley Hall, Boston featuring more than 1000 objects made by 160 craftsmen, half of whom were women.

Hand-made ornamental iron products manufactured by talented blacksmiths were the type of products desired by consumers during the Arts & Crafts Period. Thomas Googerty published two books about the design and manufacture of ornamental iron products that were considered the Arts & Crafts style of products. Thomas published his first book in 1913 and the second in 1915, in the peak of the Arts & Crafts Movement.

The consumers of the Arts & Crafts style hand-made products were the wealthier consumers. They could afford the higher prices of these higher quality products.

The vast majority of consumers could not afford to purchase these higher priced hand-made Arts & Crafts style products. Prices continued to decline for factory made products and the quality improved. Eventually, the Arts & Crafts Movement faded out of popularity because the vast majority of people chose the lower cost mass-produced products.

CHAPTER 6

Illinois State Boys Reformatory

In 2023, the author researched and then wrote a story about the history of the Boys Reformatory at Pontiac, Illinois. Thomas Googerty taught at this facility for several decades. A copy of this story is shown below:

Illinois Boys Reformatory School

By: Dale C. Maley
For: FairburyNews.net
Date: August 17, 2023

Jason Strevell was a young Pontiac attorney back in the 1850s. Mr. Strevell joined a men's club, and each month the club had a guest speaker. When it was Mr. Strevell's turn to arrange for the guest speaker, he enlisted another attorney named Abraham Lincoln to come to Pontiac and give a lecture in January of 1860. After Mr. Lincoln gave his lecture, he went to Mr. Strevell's home at 401 West Livingston Street in Pontiac to wait for his train home. Mr. Strevell asked Abe Lincoln how tall he was, and Mr. Lincoln replied he was six foot four inches tall. Mr. Strevell measured Mr. Lincoln's height in a doorway. Mr. Lincoln was indeed six foot four inches tall. The Livingston County Historical Society recently refurbished Mr. Strevell's Pontiac home, which is open for public tours.

Mr. Strevell went on to become an Illinois state congressman and State Senator. In the early 1870s, Illinois citizens decided to build a new reformatory school for young boys. In February 1871, State Senator Jason Strevell sponsored a bill to locate the new Illinois Boys Reformatory School in Pontiac, Illinois. Pontiac was selected as the site for the new school. In June of 1871, the first six young men, convicted of stealing horses in Peoria, arrived at the Illinois Boys Reformatory School in Pontiac.

The theory of the reformatory was to educate young criminals and teach them a trade. The reformatory trade education options included granite tombstone manufacturing, barbering, textile manufacturing, printing, carpentry, blacksmithing, pipe fitting, bricklaying, laundry work, engine work, electrical work, military drills, and farming.

In 1894, the reformatory averaged 2,132 inmates. The youngest boys were ten years of age. Most of the boys were between the ages of 16 and 20. In

1894, 79% of the inmates were in the 16 to 20 age group. That year, 1,160 inmates were white, and 210 were non-white boys.

The boys sent to the reformatory were convicted of many crimes. In 1894, the boys committed 53 different types of crimes. Seventy six percent of these crimes were theft-related. In 1894, twenty-six boys escaped from the reformatory. Twelve boys were captured, and three voluntarily returned to the facility.

The 1894 inmate data indicated most boys came from broken homes, and their parents were of lower incomes and poorly educated. In 1894, 45 percent of the boys came from Cook County.

After several years of operation, the reformatory management started to keep track of how successful they were at rehabilitating the young boys. In 1894, 86% of the boys left the reformatory and did not return because they had committed additional crimes. In 1904, management noted that over 5,000 boys had gone through the reformatory, and over 70% had become productive citizens.

In the early 1900s, several people and companies abused adult male prison labor in Illinois. Prison managers received kickbacks from companies for allowing these companies to use low-cost prison labor. Trade unions also complained that the prisoners were taking jobs away from union members. As a result, new convict labor laws were passed in Illinois.

Although there was no labor abuse at the Pontiac reformatory, it fell under the same new laws as the adult prisons. At the reformatory, managers had to restrict or eliminate the teaching of specific trades covered by the new law. Since printing was not one of the specified trades, the reformatory expanded its printing plant operations and taught more boys the printing trade. The boys printed a weekly newspaper for all the boys to read.

Another innovation at the reformatory was allowing the boys to set up a government and bank. Only boys under the age of 17 could participate. The reformatory management allowed the boys to pass laws, and they were enforceable. The boys also operated a bank to serve all of the boys.

The reformatory had its own library. Eventually, the reformatory had over 12,000 books in its library. Some of these books were used in the classroom.

Most Livingston County citizens in that era viewed the reformatory favorably. Students at Fairbury area country schools often visited the facility on field trips. The reformatory had an excellent record of educating the young boys and teaching them a trade. Less than 20% of the

boys had trouble with the law after finishing their sentences at the reformatory.

In 1893 the institution was changed from a boys' reformatory into a more conventional penal institution with the acceptance of inmates as old as twenty-one. The name of the institution was changed to the Illinois State Reformatory.

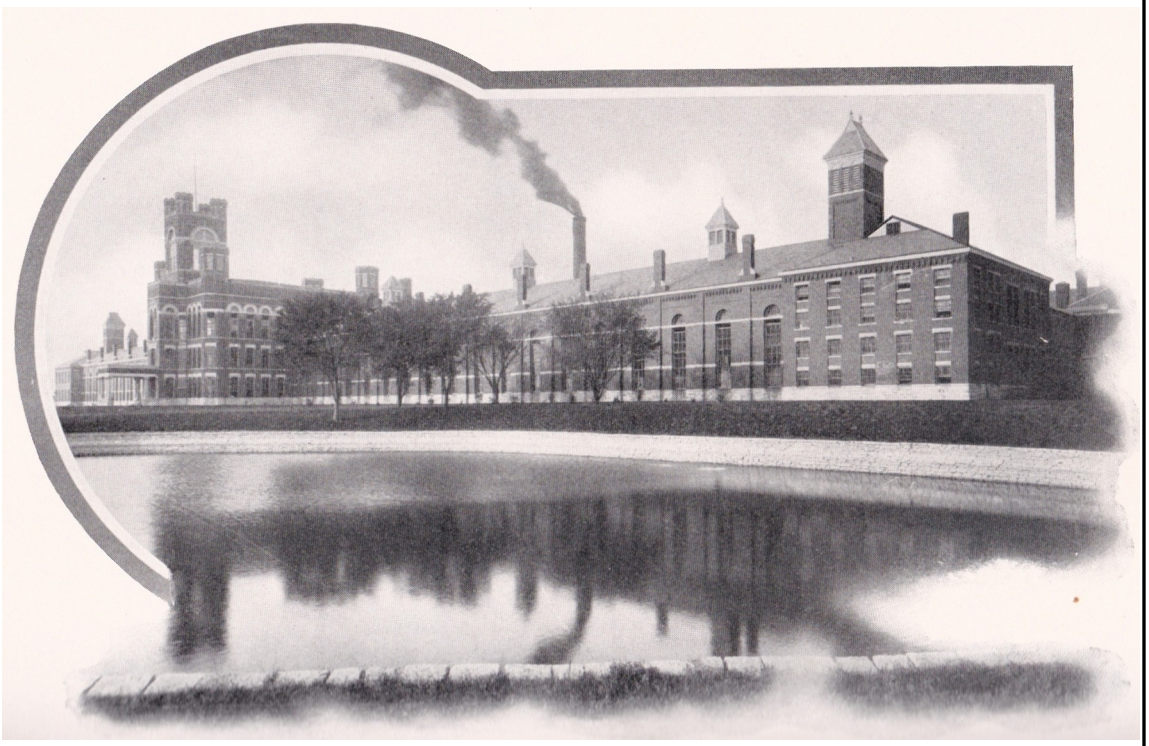
After 1904, many of the State's youngest juvenile offenders were no longer sent to Pontiac. They were placed in a new facility built in St. Charles, Illinois. This facility was named The Illinois School for Boys.

The Pontiac facility continued to evolve until it became the Pontiac Correctional Center. The current mission of the Pontiac Correctional Center is to protect the general public through incarceration, supervision, programs, and services designated to return offenders to the community with the skills to be useful and productive citizens.

The facility now consists of a total of 63 buildings, which comprise more than 744,000 square feet. The facility sits on a 37-acre site, with 32 acres enclosed by fencing. Pontiac Correctional Center houses the following offenders: segregation, protective custody, mental health, administrative detention reintegration management, and medium security.

For its first 20 years of existence, the Illinois Boys Reformatory School had a mission to educate and train boys between the ages of 10 and eighteen. The boys could learn any of 26 different trades. The facility was successful in that over 80% of the boys became productive members of society.

Boys learning the tinner's trade in the tin shop at the Reformatory in 1900.



1902 photo of the Reformatory

CHAPTER 7

1800 to 1869

The story of the Googerty family began with the birth of William Googerty in 1800 in Ireland. In 1824, Bridget Googerty, a sister of William Googerty (1800-1873) was also born in Ireland.

Around 1829, William Googerty (1800-1873) married Margaret. The surname of Margaret is not known at this time. When they married, William was 29 and Margaret was only 14 years of age if her birth date of 1815 is correct.

In 1829, William and Margaret Googerty had their only child, William Googerty (1829-1869). It is unknown whether or not William Googerty (1829-1869) was born in Ireland or America.

William Googerty (1800-1873) Came to Pontiac from Elgin in 1850

According to the 1909 Volume II history book, William came to Pontiac in 1850.

> William Googerty, Sr., first came to Pontiac about 1850.

1st Railroad in Livingston County in 1854

Livingston County was created in 1837. It was one of the last parts of Illinois to be settled and farmed because it was swampland, and there were no railroads to import needed supplies or export farm products.

These two problems were solved by railroads built in the 1850s and drainage of the swampland by orange clay field tile in the 1880s. Fortunately, the 1878 Livingston County history book by LeBaron recounts the construction and routes of the first railroads built in Livingston County.

The first railroad in Livingston County was the Chicago & Mississippi Railroad, running from Joliet to Alton. It was built in 1853 and 1854. A few years later, it was purchased by T. B. Blackstone and renamed the Chicago & Alton Railroad. Initially, the stations on the main line were Dwight, Odell, Cayuga, Pontiac, and Ocoya.

The 1909 Volume II history book reports that Mr. Googerty brought his wife and son from Elgin down to Pontiac.

> About the time the railroad came through he returned to Elgin and induced his son and wife to accompany him to Pontiac, which they did.

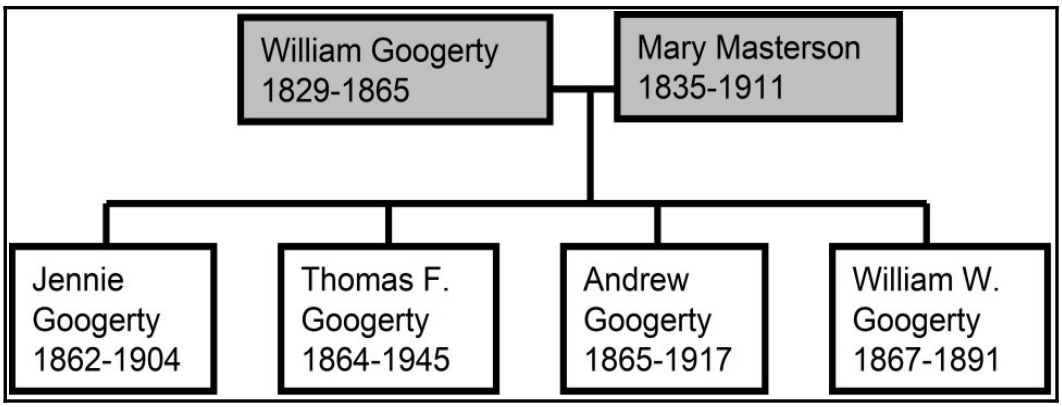
One of the First Businesses in Pontiac

The 1909 Volume II history book recounts that William Googerty (1800-1873) and his son set up one of the earliest businesses in Pontiac, Illinois.

> When the Chicago, Alton and St Louis Railroad entered Pontiac in July, 1854, the little hamlet was made a wooding station for the engines, and remained so until coal was brought into general use for this purpose along in the late '60s.
>
> Thus, for over ten years, every engine along the line of the road between Chicago and St. Louis would stop at Pontiac for wood, all cut from the banks of the Vermilion near the line of the road.
>
> A large wood shed was erected by the company along the tracks of the road between Livingston and Prairie streets for this purpose, where the farmers would bring in their four-foot wood and throw it into the shed to be cut up Into one and one-third lengths ready for the fire box.
>
> William Googerty and his son, William Googerty, Jr., were the contractors to supply the road with wood at this point, and they held it as long as wood was used for fuel. While it lasted, it was the only "industry" in the hamlet at the time.
>
> Two band saws, run by horse-power, were kept running almost constantly night and day, and it was the means of giving many people employment, which in those days was hard to find.

William Googerty (1829-1869) Marries

Around 1862, William Googerty (1829-1865) married Mary Masterson. He was 33 and she was 27 when they married. Mary's 1911 obituary recounted that she was born in County Meath in Ireland. William and Mary Googerty had four children as shown on their family tree below:



Tragedy Strikes the Googerty Family in 1869

The 1909 Volume II history book recounts that William Googerty (1829-1865) was killed by some type of railroad car accident.

> William Googerty, Sr., first came to Pontiac about 1850. About the time the railroad came through he returned to Elgin and induced his son and wife to accompany him to Pontiac, which they did. William Googerty and son are long since dead, the latter being killed by the cars near where the widow and her two sons, Thomas and Andrew, now reside.

The FindaGrave website has a listing for him in an unmarked grave in Saint Mary's Cemetery in Pontiac. His FindaGrave listing says his death date was August 6, 1865. No document is referenced which substantiates this date.

The 1917 obituary of Andrew Googerty recounts that his father had died 48 years before. That information would make the death date of his father William 1917 minus 48 which is 1869. This death date makes more sense than 1865 because youngest son William was born in 1867.

Young Widow Left to Raise Four Small Children

William Googerty (1829-1869) was only 40 years old when he died in 1869. His widow, Mary Googerty, was 35 years old when her husband died. Mary had to provide for and raise four young children all under the age of seven.

Mary Googerty's father-in-law and mother-in-law also lived in Pontiac. They would have likely helped out with the children.

Bridget Googerty, sister of William Googerty (1800-1873), emigrated from Ireland to Pontiac in 1870. She also helped the family of Mary Googerty.

CHAPTER 8

1870 to 1894

Bridget Googerty Emigrates from Ireland to Pontiac in 1870

According to the 1900 Census, Bridget emigrated in 1870 from Ireland to Pontiac.

William Googerty (1800-1873) Dies in Pontiac in 1873

He was 73 years of age when he died. No death notice or obituary was found in the Pontiac newspapers, the Pantagraph, the Fairbury Blade, or other newspapers. His death date does appear on his gravestone at Saint Mary's Cemetery in Pontiac.

Illinois State Senator Jason Strevell Gets New Boys Reformatory Built at Pontiac in 1871

Jason Strevell lived at 401 W. Livingston Street in Pontiac. His house still stands and is on the National Register of Historic Places.

In the early 1870s, Illinois citizens decided to build a new reformatory school for young boys. In February 1871, State Senator Jason Strevell sponsored a bill to locate the new Illinois Boys Reformatory School in Pontiac, Illinois. Pontiac was selected as the site for the new school.

In June of 1871, the first six young men, convicted of stealing horses in Peoria, arrived at the Illinois Boys Reformatory School in Pontiac. Thomas F. Googerty was seven years old when this new facility opened.

Thomas F. Googerty Trains to be a Blacksmith

According to the 1999 Googerty Memphis Exhibit Pamphlet, Thomas F. Googerty had started his blacksmith training by the time he was 16 years old in 1880.

> By 1880 Tom was working in a local blacksmith's shop. Sometime during the 1880s he left Pontiac on his journeyman's quest, traveling the country, practicing his trade. Chicago would have been a natural destination, a booming nearby city with plenty of smithing work and an active arts community.
>
> Where Tom journeyed during the 1880s and the early 1890s remains unclear, but he must have spent as much time in museums, schools, and libraries as he did at the forge. By the time he returned to Pontiac in 1894, Tom transformed himself from a skilled small town blacksmith into a sophisticated master craftsman. Somewhere in his travels he had steeped himself in the traditions of medieval European ironwork and embraced the most energetic social and cultural reform movements of the day.

When Thomas Googerty returned to Pontiac in 1894, he would have been 30 years of age.

Margaret Googerty Likely Died around 1889

Margaret Googerty was the wife of William Googerty (1800-1873). Per the Pontiac Sentinel newspaper, she paid property tax on a lot or house in 1887 and 1889. In 1889, Margaret would have been 74 years old. There was no further mention of Margaret Googerty in any of local newspapers.

William W. Googerty Died in 1891 at the Age of Only 24

During the period that Thomas Googerty was training to be a blacksmith, his brother, William W. Googerty died in Pontiac in 1891.

Both Andrew Googerty and his brother William W. Googerty were mail agents on the Alton Railroad that ran through Pontiac. William experienced medical problems with consumption. This disease was later renamed to tuberculosis. William transferred his job to Texas for a better climate, but ended up dying of tuberculosis.

On April 17, 1891, the Pontiac Sentinel published the following article about William W. Googerty.

> Will Googerty came home several weeks ago from Texas very sick. His health has been very poor for several years, but it is hoped a change of climate will do him good. He was formerly a mail route agent on the Alton.

Unfortunately, William W. Googerty did not get better and he died in a few weeks. His obituary from the May 22, 1891, Pontiac Sentinel is shown below.

Obituary

> William Googerty, aged 25 years, died at his home in this city last Saturday afternoon at six o'clock. He had been seriously ill of consumption for several weeks, but his ultimate recovery had been hoped for up to the last.
>
> Will was born in Pontiac, and had always lived here until a few years ago, when he went to Texas to engage in the mail service. It was from there he returned when attacked by his last illness. This latter absence did not sever, however, the many friendships of his former associates here, made by his frank, open manner, unquestionable integrity, and sterling worth. It was his happy lot to make friends wherever he might be, and many, both here and abroad will sorely miss his absence from their midst.
>
> His death is indeed a sad blow to his loving mother, sister, and brothers, and has cast a never-to-be-forgotten gloom over their lives here below.

May they find comfort in the assurance of a joyful reunion in a happier land beyond the tomb.

The earthly remains were taken, Monday morning, to the Catholic church, of which deceased was a member, where a requiem mass, conducted by Father Lyons, was held, after which they were followed by a large concourse of people to their final resting place in the Catholic cemetery. ***Requiescat in pace.***

Thomas F. Googerty Starts His Career as an Instructor at the Boys Reformatory in 1894

According to the 1999 Googerty Memphis Exhibit Pamphlet, Thomas F. Googerty was hired as an instructor at the Boy's Reformatory in 1894 when he was 30 years old. In the 1999 pamphlet, the Boys Reformatory is referred to as the ISR (Illinois State Reformatory).

> In 1894 Superintendent McClaughry hired Googerty to set up the ISR forge shop, one of the more than thirty trade shops and supporting classrooms that by 1905 made up the ISR manual training program.
>
> He hired on as one of McClaughry's new "competent, gentlemanly instructors" at a salary of $650 a year, near the upper end of the ISR instructor pay scale. [His salary of $650 in 1894 would be equivalent to $23,949 in 2024 dollars]
>
> Tom began modestly with four students in a makeshift forge housed in the former prison privy. He focused on character-building vocational education designed to prepare each inmate, on release, "to earn a respectable living and redeem himself."
>
> Shop skills taught self-reliance and self-respect: "If one is to be successful in designing and making ornamental ironwork," wrote Googerty in 1903, "he must learn to use his head in conjunction with his hands; that is to say he must think out his own ideas and not be depending on someone else."
>
> Although ISR tried to depersonalize inmates by dressing them in uniforms and calling them by number rather than name, Googerty encouraged pride in personal accomplishment. He usually stamped his own work with a distinctive maker's mark, and had at least his best apprentices do the same. Several examples of student-stamped ISR ironwork survive, hinting at the existence of a much larger but yet unrecognized body of inmate artisanship.
>
> Googerty's forge never became as large as the chair caning, furniture, carpentry, knitting, printing, and other ISR shops that continued for years to operate under convict labor contracts. His shop merely grew with the institution.
>
> In 1898 he moved into larger, but temporary quarters. in 1905 Googerty moved again into a new 4,000-square-foot shop equipped with eighteen forges, a power hammer, a foundry, and a full complement of hand and machine tools. it was Tom's workplace for the rest of his life. He never set up a forge at home.

Googerty usually taught about thirty students at a time, who split their days between the classroom and the shop floor. His full course ran about 18 months. Only a few inmates had the natural aptitude or interest to benefit fully from a Googerty apprenticeship. His inmate-artisans were a cross-section of the general reformatory population, which during his years generally fluctuated between one and two thousand.

Almost all ISR inmates were teenagers, though many were under twelve and some were as young as eight. The majority were incarcerated for burglary or larceny, or simply as juvenile delinquents who had gotten into trouble once too often. About five per cent were African American, more often than not from southern Illinois.

For his time, an era of raging racism, the Supreme Court sanctioned Jim Crow segregation laws and endemic lynching, Googerty was unusually liberal on the race question. He took particular interest and pride in his African American students, concluding they often showed more talent and drive than his white trainees. Tom showcased their ironwork in exhibits and articles, and pasted their pictures in his personal album next to snapshots of family and friends.

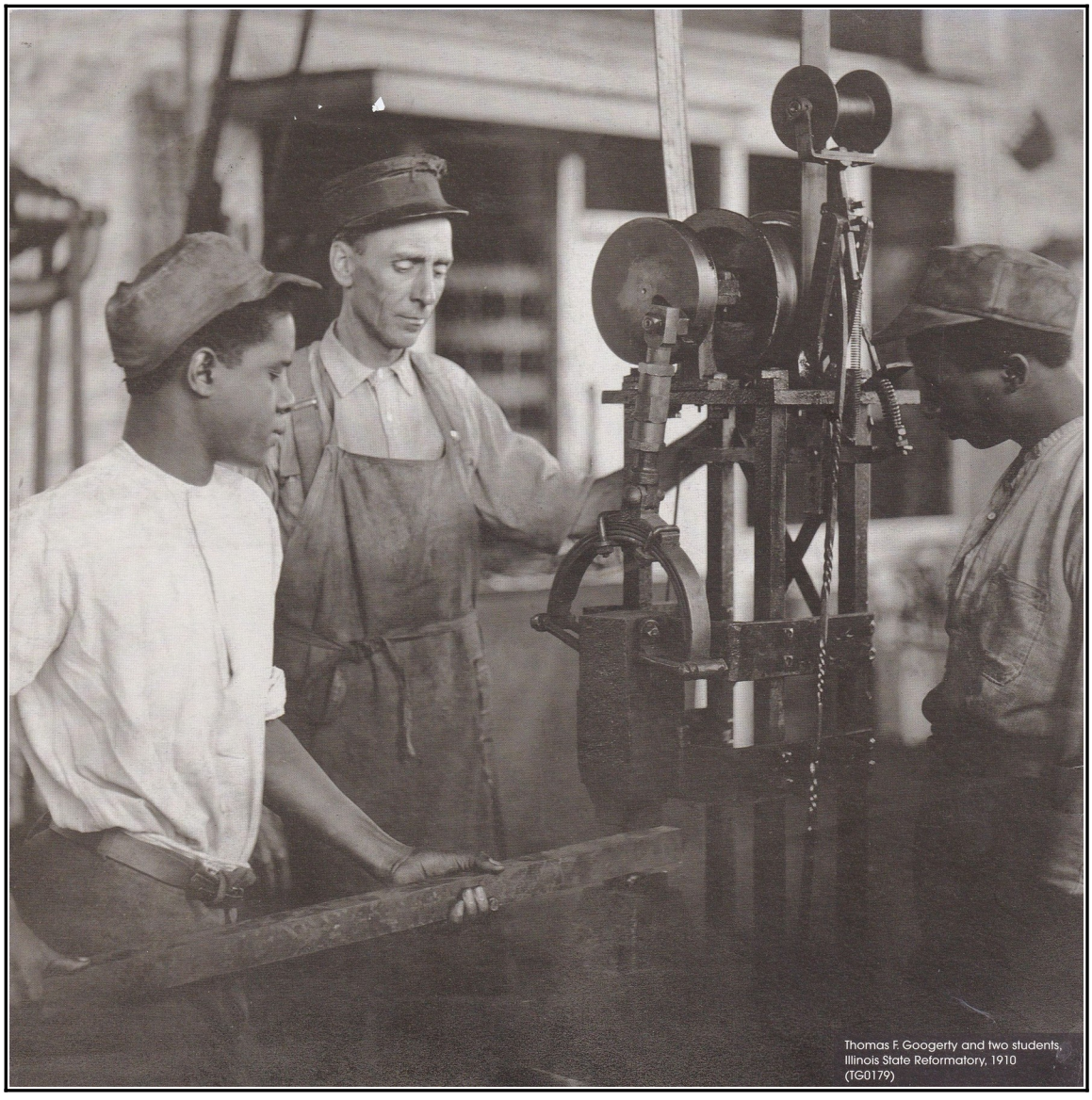
In a modem age of razor-wired maximum security it is hard to imagine the character and tone of ISR at the turn of the century. The reformatory was a local economic asset—state money poured in for new buildings, upgraded grounds, and staff salaries. It was also the community's major cultural asset and visitor attraction.

Before 1912 there was no prison wall save a low wooden fence, yet escapes were rare. A constant stream of visitors toured the grounds and bought souvenirs in the trade school exhibit rooms. The spacious chapel was a popular venue for meetings and parties.

Local residents and visitors from nearby towns flocked to summertime picnics, ice cream socials, and weekly band concerts on the park-like grounds. inmates marched in Pontiac parades and often entertained church and civic groups. Sometimes short-handed high school teams borrowed inmate players for important games. The excellent ISR weekly newspaper, The Pioneer, sold well at Pontiac newsstands.

Photograph of Thomas F. Googerty with Two of His Students at the Reformatory

There is a photo in the 1999 Googerty Memphis Exhibit Pamphlet of Thomas F. Googerty and two of his blacksmithing students at the Boys Reformatory.



CHAPTER 9

1895 to 1917

Thomas F. Googerty was the Locksmith for the Boy's Reformatory

According to the 1999 Googerty Memphis Exhibit Pamphlet, Thomas F. Googerty was the locksmith who made and maintained the many locks needed at the Boy's Reformatory, which later became the men's prison. In 1898, Googerty personally made 500 massive five-tumbler locks for a new cell block completed that year. His students helped with all the smithing work needed to keep a large institution going, including fashioning many of the bars, grilles, and gates that held the prisoners within its walls.

Thomas F. Googerty Began to Publish Blacksmithing Articles in 1903

According to the 1999 Googerty Memphis Exhibit Pamphlet, the first of more than 50 articles written by Thomas F. Googerty was published in 1903. The title of this first article was ***The Blacksmith Boy in the Illinois State Reformatory*** in The American Blacksmith magazine.

A complete listing of all the articles written by Thomas Googerty is in the back of the 1999 Googerty Memphis Exhibit Pamphlet.

Great-Aunt of Thomas Googerty dies in 1904

The Daily Leader published a death notice for Bridget Googerty and a copy is shown below.

> Pontiac Daily Leader
> February 29, 1904
>
> The remains of the late Bridget Googerty, who died in St. Joseph's hospital in Bloomington Friday evening, were brought to this city on the Alton Limited Sunday for burial. Short services were held at St. Mary's church from where the interment was made in the Catholic cemetery. Mrs. Googerty was 95 years old.

Comments on the Death Notice for Bridget Googerty

The Pantagraph published a similar death notice, except it stated she was 80 and not 95 years old when she died. Her gravestone in St. Mary's Cemetery states that she was 80 years of age when she died.

Sister of Thomas Googerty Dies a Few Months Later in 1904

Jennie Googerty was only 42 years old when she died in Pontiac in 1904. A copy of her obituary from the Pontiac Daily Leader is shown below.

> Pontiac Daily Leader
> June 10, 1904
>
> **Death of Jennie Googerty**
>
> Miss Jennie Googerty, of West North street, died at eleven o'clock last night at St. Francis Hospital in Chicago, where she was taken last Tuesday for treatment. The remains were brought to this city this afternoon, and funeral services will be held Sunday, from the Catholic church, interment in the Catholic cemetery.
>
> Jennie Googerty was born and spent her life in Pontiac. By her sweet disposition and ever-thoughtfulness of others she endeared herself to all her associates, who will deeply mourn her death. Her widowed mother, and two brothers, Thomas and Andrew, survive her, and who have the sympathy of many friends in their bereavement.

Thomas F. Googerty Publishes His First Book in 1911

In 1911, he published his first of three books he would eventually author. Thomas Googerty's 1911 book is considered his most important and influential book. This 1911 book is still used by new blacksmiths today.

The title of this 1911 book is ***Hand Forging and Wrought-Iron Ornamental Work*** by Thomas F. Googerty. The publisher was the Popular Mechanics Company in Chicago. This book is 178 pages long.

HAND-FORGING

And Wrought-Iron Ornamental Work

By
THOMAS F. GOOGERTY

With Numerous Illustrations from Photographs and Drawings by the Author

CHICAGO: POPULAR MECHANICS COMPANY, PUBLISHERS

Preface

REALIZING a demand for an inexpensive text-book on the subject of hand-wrought ornamental ironwork, this volume is offered to instructors in manual training, students, professional workers and others interested in this fascinating handicraft. While it deals largely with interior ironwork, it shows also the constructive principles of ornamental hand-forging and points out the guiding principles and methods which underlie all forge work.

That the amateur may more readily understand the principles involved, a number of designs and drawings, made by the author while teaching decorative ironwork, with instructions for working them out, have been incorporated in the text. These, it is hoped, will prove of value in stimulating original work. Most of the photographic reproductions contained in this volume represent specimens executed by pupils under the direction of

THE AUTHOR.

Pontiac, Illinois.

Googerty Began Teaching Summer Blacksmithing Course in Wisconsin in 1911

The Stout Institute, a major industrial arts training school in Menomonie, Wisconsin, invited Googerty to teach a summer course. Googerty taught summer courses at this school for several years.

Thomas F. Googerty Expands from Blacksmithing to Sketching and Painting around 1914

A review of the ornamental iron designs created by Thomas F. Googerty indicates that he had an artistic streak. He expanded his artistic talents by taking up sketching and painting around 1914. The Pantagraph did a major article about the Amitytown Society of Painters on April 9, 1944, just a year before Thomas F. Googerty died in 1945. The article recounted that Thomas Googerty got interested in sketching and painting about 30 years before the article was published, or about 1914.

Pontiac Amateur Artists Paint for Fun

Display Canvases at Woman's Club

PONTIAC.—Members of the Amitytown Society of Painters left their easels and oils, crayons, pencils, and water colors long enough Tuesday afternoon to allow the public a glimpse of some of their paintings and sketches, when a gallery of 41 pictures of their creation was exhibited by the fine arts department of the Pontiac Woman's club in the Masonic temple.

The display was the fourth annual showing of the society, which is composed of 15 artists who paint mostly in Amity township. Some 25 or 30 years ago, three Pontiac young men—Dr. Thomas Lockie, Thomas Googerty, and Moore Foster—banded together to follow their hobby of pencil sketching.

At that time, an artist friend, G. Y. Straus, who came regularly to Pontiac to paint, interested the trio in oils, water colors, and crayons as other fascinating media for imprisoning the beauty of the Vermilion river country. The group has attracted others from the community with artistic talent, with the result that about five years ago, the Amitytown Society of Painters with 15 active members, was born.

The afternoon program for the Woman's club meeting also included a recorded lecture by Dr. Dudley Crafts Watson entitled "National Gallery of Art." and was accompanied by the showing of color films of the world's greatest paintings.

The exhibit, which was open to the public following the Woman's club meeting, included the following pictures;

OIL PAINTINGS

Dr. Thomas Lockie:

Brown County, Indiana
Byroad
Still Life
Pontiac Stone Quarry Route 23

Miss Catharine Yost:

South Fork of the Potomac River, West Virginia
The Chute
Fairview, West Virginia
Dahlia Garden of a West Virginia Coal Miner
Portrait of Miss Ruth Gornto, Virginia Beach
Mill Street Bridge

Thomas Googerty:

Group of Buildings, Parrish River Place
River at Husteds
Country Road

Thelma Gehring:

Tulips
Country Road
Wharf

Louise Schneider:

River at Heisner's Island Bridge
Burr Oak River Country Place of John Parrish
Sumac on Cornell Road
Chalet Apartment and Garden, 422 West Henry Street

Stephen Adist

Composition and Landscape

Pastel Pictures

Thelma Gehring:

Grandma Snyder

Paul Yost:

Sawmill on Laurel Run, West Virginia

Ann Allen Myers:

Three still life pictures.

Water Color Paintings

Lawrence Clark:

Mill Street Bridge
Vermilion River
Boston Terrier

Paul Yost:

Swimmin' Hole
West Virginia
Top of the Hill

Thelma Gehring:

Passion Flower

Pencil Sketches

Dr. Thomas Lockie:

Road to the East Side Club
Bend in the River
River's Edge
Sketch
Trees

The photographs that accompanied the article are shown below.

Pontiac. Catching interest of the group is Catherine Yost's painting. Left to right, Mrs. E. R. Bessman, president of the Woman's club; Catherine Yost, Mrs. Robert Thompson, fine arts chairman, Paul Yost and Louise Schneider.

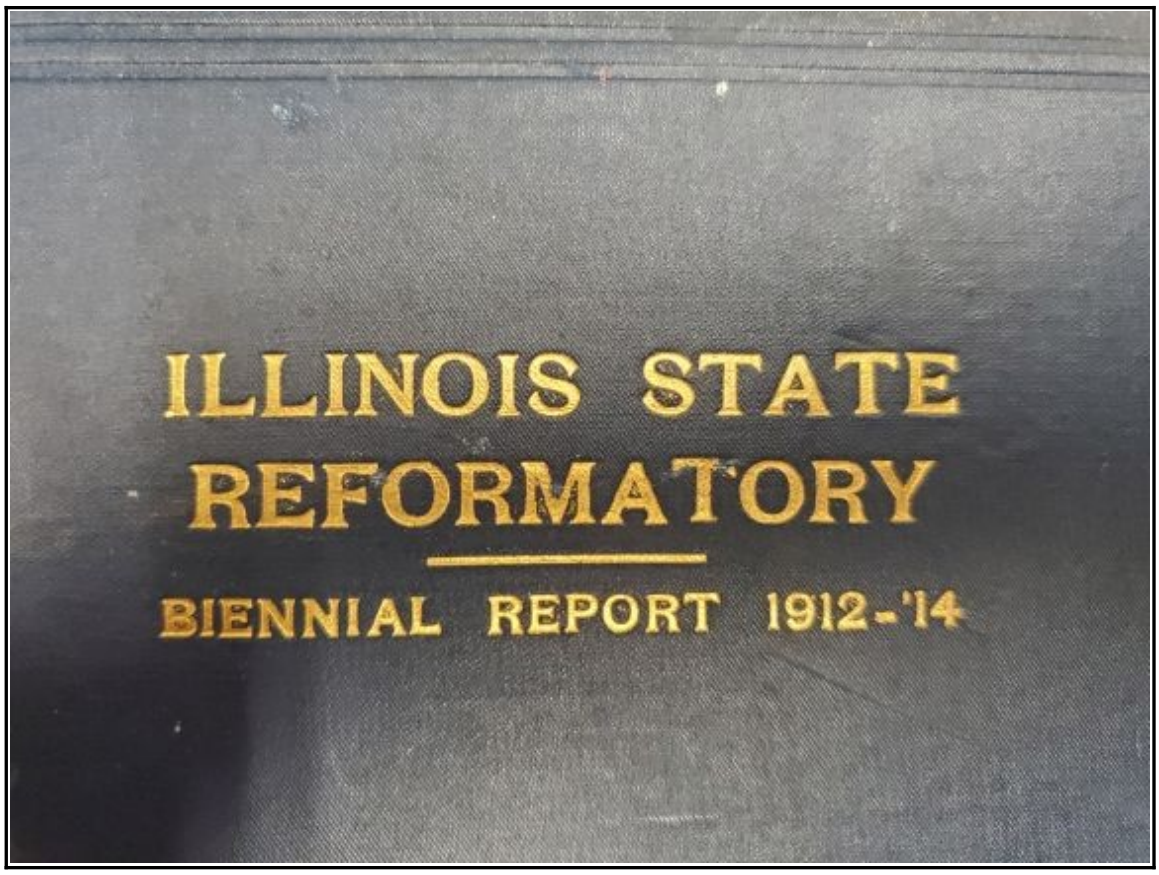
OPEN DISCUSSION. Paul Yost discusses some of the fine points of portrait painting, using his sister, Catherine's, painting of "Miss Ruth Gorto, Virginia Beach," as an example.

SHOP TALK. A group of Amitytown artists discuss some of their work -- all oil paintings. Standing, Paul Yost. Seated, left to right, Catherine Yost, whose picture, "Mill Street Bridge," appears lower right; Louise Schneider, whose painting, "Chalet Apartment and Garden, 422 West Henry Street," hangs at lower left; Thelma Gehring, whose "Tulips" hangs above.

RIVER VIEW. Mrs. Robert Thompson admires an oil painting by Thomas Googerty, "River at Husteds," in Amity township, as she checks the number with her program.

Photo of Reformatory Blacksmith Shop in 1914

The Livingston County Historical Society has about six hard-bound biennial reports from the Reformatory back to the Governor of Illinois. These date back from the 1890s up through the 1910s. The 1912-14 book has a photo of the blacksmith shop at the Reformatory. The boys at the Reformatory actually printed these books as part of learning the printing trade.



BLACKSMITH SHOP

Googerty Received National Acclaim in 1914

In 1914, Thomas F. Googerty was elected to a Craftsman member of Boston's prestigious Society of Arts and Crafts. He was 50 years of age when he received this award. Thomas F. Googerty was elevated to the Master Craftsman level a few years later.

Thomas F. Googerty Publishes His Second Book in 1915

The title of his second book is ***Practical Forging and Art Smithing*** by Thomas F. Googerty. It is 147 pages long and was published by the Bruce Publishing Company in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Practical Forging and Art Smithing

THOMAS F. GOOGERTY

Milwaukee, Wis.
The Bruce Publishing Company

INTRODUCTION

THE present demand for school instruction in the industrial arts has made it necessary for the teachers of industries to have that knowledge of materials and methods which can only result from long and careful experience with the materials of industry.

This book is the result of a life of such experience by a man who is now recognized as a master craftsman in wrought metal.

The author's work in wrought iron is comparable in design and finish to the best work that has been produced in that material.

Some pieces of the best German work are before me as I make this statement and tho more intricate they are no better in execution and far less suitable to the material in design than the pieces illustrated in this book which I have seen in process of execution and in the finished form.

The author has moreover been a teacher of wrought metal work for many years.

This experience is reflected in the sequence of difficulty presented by the exercises and the clear, simple statement of the text.

With such clear and exact statement and with such profuse illustration it is evident that the metal worker can gather much of the author's long experience from this book and take many a short cut to success in an accomplishment to which there can be no royal road.

But the effectiveness of an applied art is measured best by its expression of purpose within the limitations of the material used.

4 INTRODUCTION—Continued

The artistic success of this book lies in the evident fact that the work represented appears "Hand wrought and fashioned to beauty and use."

I predict for it increasing usefulness in setting right the practice of forging in school shops and as an inspiration to teachers, craftsmen and tradesmen.

EDWARD J. LAKE.

Andrew Googerty Died in 1917

Andrew Googerty, brother of Thomas F. Googerty, died in 1917 at the age of 52.

His obituary, published in the May 7, 1917, Pontiac Daily Leader is shown below.

SUDDEN DEATH OF ANDREW GOOGERTY

Andrew Googerty, a well-known resident of this city, died at St. James' hospital in this city Saturday evening, May 5, 1917, death being due to heart trouble, following an illness of two weeks.

The funeral service was held this morning at 9 o'clock from St. Mary's church, Rev. Father Cannon conducting the service. Burial was in St. Mary's cemetery, east of this city, the burial services being conducted by the Knights of Columbus, of which the deceased was a member.

Mr. Googerty was born in this city June 27, 1866, being a son of William and Mary (Masterson) Googerty, pioneer settlers of this city. Mr. Googerty spent all of his life in this city. A number of years ago he entered the United States railway mail service on the Chicago & Alton railway between Chicago and St. Louis. Through his faithful attention to the duties of his position he gained the highest regard of his superiors as well as those of his associated, and was at the time of his death one of the oldest members of the service.

Mr. Googerty is survived by one brother, Thomas, of this city. His father passed away forty-eight years ago and his mother seven years ago. He was preceded in death by a sister and a brother.

Comments on the Andrew Googerty Obituary

Andrew Googerty was 52 when he died. Thomas F. Googerty was also 52 when his brother Andrew died. Thomas F. Googerty became the last surviving member of his family after Andrew died.

The obituary states that his father died 48 years before he died in 1917. This would place the date of death of William Googerty at 1869. FindaGrave has a death date of August 6, 1865.

The FindaGrave death date of 1865 conflicts with the youngest son William F. Googerty being born in 1867. It is more likely the father of Thomas Googerty died in 1869 and not 1865.

Wealth of Thomas F. Googerty After His Brother Andrew Died in 1917

According to the 1999 Googerty Memphis Exhibit Pamphlet, Thomas F. Googerty received a sizable inheritance from his brother Andrew.

> Money was never a worry, especially after 1917, when Tom's more business-minded brother Andrew bequeathed him a substantial portfolio of securities and income property.

CHAPTER 10

1918 to 1944

Thomas Googerty Made Iron Poorbox for Pontiac Catholic Church in 1920

A poor box, in a Catholic context, is a box or receptacle located in a church, typically near the entrance, where parishioners can deposit donations for the poor and needy. It serves as a means for almsgiving, a traditional practice of charity within the Catholic faith.

According to the 1999 Googerty Memphis Exhibit Pamphlet, Thomas F. Googerty made a poorbox for his Pontiac Catholic Church around 1920.

> The most elaborate display of Googerty's own work was a twenty-piece exhibit that visited the Milwaukee, Buffalo, Detroit, St. Louis, and Kansas City municipal art museums in the winter of 1920-1921.
>
> Visitors especially appreciated the wrought iron and brass Gothic style cathedral poorbox he had made for his Pontiac parish church. Tom regarded it as his masterpiece.

Thomas Googerty Retired from Full-Time Teaching in 1930

According to the 1999 Googerty Memphis Exhibit Pamphlet, Thomas F. Googerty retired from full-time teaching in 1930. Thomas was 66 years of age when he semi-retired in 1930.

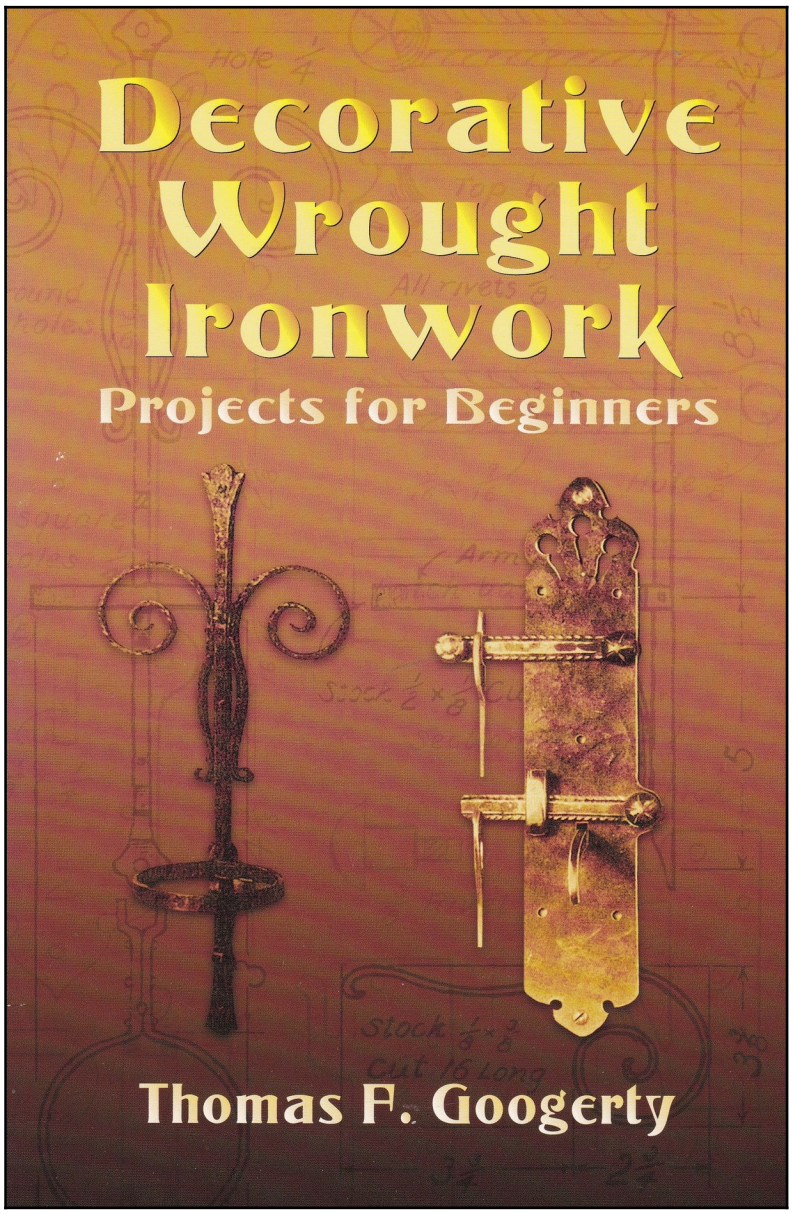
> Googerty retired from full-time ISR teaching around 1930, claiming that he had "lost the feel of the hammer." By then the Reformatory's original reformist optimism had also dimmed, reflected in its 1933 name change to the Illinois State Penitentiary, Pontiac Branch. Googerty turned increasingly to painting, rendering dozens of somber wooded landscapes. His favorite locales were picturesque Brown County, Indiana, and a deserted farmstead a few miles downriver from Pontiac, which he nicknamed Amitytown. In 1940, Googerty and other like-minded local artists founded the Amitytown Society of Painters to encourage students and sponsor exhibitions.

Although officially retired, Tom nonetheless kept his hand in at ISR for another decade and a half. He volunteered to train small classes of unusually gifted inmate-artisans, and continued to maintain the institution's thousands of locks. From time to time, Googerty undertook special projects, such as the fireplace furniture and front gates for the American Legion Billet in Pontiac, and the high school athletic field gates in nearby Dwight, Illinois. He made dignified Celtic gates for Pontiac's Roman Catholic cemetery and impish Gothic gates for its city cemetery. The latter, installed in 1942, were his last major projects in wrought iron.

On October 27, 1945, Tom Googerty suffered a heart attack at work. He died two days later. The matter-of-fact, front page obituary in the Daily Leader recounted the career of the distinguished local craftsman most Pontiac residents had hardly known.

Thomas F. Googerty Publishes His 3rd and Last Book in 1937

In 1937, when Thomas F. Googerty was 73 years of age, he published his last book which was titled ***Decorative Wrought Iron Works***. The publisher was the Manual Arts Press in Peoria, Illinois. This book is 80 pages long.



Decorative Wrought Ironwork

Projects for Beginners

Thomas F. Googerty

An excellent introduction to the exciting world of ironwork, this easy-to-follow guide features dozens of simple, traditional plans for use by amateur craftspeople and students interested in metalworking. Articles in the collection have been selected for their simplicity, but some previous experience in at least a few of the more common, basic processes employed in forging metals is recommended.

The manual contains everything metalsmiths and hobbyists could wish for, including precisely drawn-to-scale patterns, descriptive notes on the tools of the trade, and detailed instructions on the metalworking process. More than 45 illustrations provide clearly drawn designs for flowerpot holders and stands, ash trays, andirons, candlesticks, door latches and locks, hinges, lamps, door knockers, and other decorative domestic accessories.

A rich source of information and inspiration, *Decorative Wrought Ironwork Projects for Beginners* invites hobbyists to choose from a remarkable variety of motifs that can be successfully fashioned with the help of working drawings and helpful notes on construction.

Dover (2005) republication of *Decorative Wrought Iron Work*, originally published by The Manual Arts Press, Peoria, Illinois, 1937. 21 plates, with more than 45 figure drawings. 80pp. 6⅛ x 9¼. Paperbound.

Thomas Googerty One of the Founders of the Amitytown Society of Painters in 1940

A book was prepared to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the founding of Livingston County in 1837. The Arts and Entertainment chapter was written by Robert B. McKenzie. An excerpt from this chapter is shown below.

> From a brochure written by J. Paul Yost and printed in November 1971, one learns the basic history of this group's organization, intent, and efforts. Yost wrote, "The Amitytown Society of Painters was organized in the spring of 1940 by a group of local artists who had been painting together on Thursday and Sunday afternoon for several summers along the river at the Lyle Husted farm near Cornell, Illinois. The founders were two Pontiac men, Dr. Thomas Lockie, a local dentist and a member of the Brown County Indiana Group, and Thomas Googerty, considered on the country's outstanding craftsmen and designer of decorative wrought iron. For over 30 years, Mr. Googerty taught forge and wrought iron work at the Pontiac State Penitentiary. He bequeathed his own work to the Chicago Art Institute. The gates at the Catholic Cemetery and the South Side Cemetery in Pontiac are other examples.
>
> "Mr. Googerty selected the name, "The Amitytown Society of Painters," because the group confined their activities around a mythical town, "Amity," which was an abandoned house on an old mill site on the Lyle Husted farm two miles south of Cornell.
>
> "The object of the Society, according to Mr. Googerty, was the advancement of all those who are interested in landscape painting, including amateur and professionals alike; to bring more knowledge to people who are interested in and like painting; also, to encourage girls and boys in schools, and to encourage them to make an honest effort to produce landscapes, in whatever medium they wish to use. The Society would furnish lecturers to point out why the pictures were painted in the particular manner used, and to answer questions regarding methods used in painting."

CHAPTER 11

1945

Life of Thomas Googerty in the 1940s

In 1940, Thomas Googerty was 76 years of age. He still volunteered his time to teach blacksmithing to inmates at the Pontiac Prison. He worked part-time at the prison maintaining the thousands of locks required at the prison.

Thomas Googerty also continued to paint as a founding member of the Amitytown Painters group. He participated in the annual exhibitions conducted each year in the early 1940s.

Thomas F. Googerty Died in 1945

He died in 1945 at the age of 80 in October of 1945. His obituary printed in the Daily Leader is shown below.

> Pontiac Daily Leader
> October 30, 1945
>
> **T. F. GOOGERTY, CRAFTSMAN, DIES AT HOSPITAL HERE**
>
> Thomas F. Googerty, 80, recognized as one of the nation's greatest craftsmen in decorating wrought iron work, died shortly before last midnight at St. James hospital.
>
> Funeral services will be held at 9 a.m. Friday at St. Mary church with the Rev. Thomas E. Shea officiating. The Rosary will be said at 8 p.m. Thursday at the Raleigh J. Harris funeral home. Friends may call at the funeral home Thursday.
>
> Mr. Googerty's friends are planning an exhibit of his work to be held in the near future at William's mill. Also included will be work by some of those who studied under him at the Pontiac prison, where he was an instructor in forge and wrought iron for many years.
>
> Mr. Googerty was born here November 14, 1864. His home was at 701 North Division Street.
>
> **Left School at 13**
>
> At the age of 13, he left the fourth grade of school and worked on a farm and also in Pontiac doing various jobs. At 15, he went to work as a

blacksmith's helper in a carriage shop, receiving 25 cents a day for 10 hours work. He later worked in many cities, doing all kinds of blacksmith work.

He accepted the position as an instructor of forge work in the Illinois State Reformatory here. In the meantime, he studied drawing and decorative designing along with landscape painting. He devoted his time to many endeavors, including decorating silver, brass, wood carving and copper craftsmanship. He worked as a locksmith and designed and executed many decorative wrought iron locks.

Decorative wrought iron work interested him more than any of the other crafts, and he made a careful study of the iron work of the past. Mr. Googerty had exhibited his work in most of the large museums of the country. He received prizes from the Art Institute of Chicago in 1914 and 1921 for work he exhibited there.

Author of Books

The author of books on wrought iron work, he also contributed many articles to magazines on the subject. He taught forge work for seven years in the summer school of the Stout Institute of Menomonie, Wisconsin. He was a member of many craft associations and at the time of his death was a member of the Boston Society of Craftsmen. In 1915, he was promoted to the grade of master craftsman in the latter society.

Mr. Googerty was a founder of the Amitytown Society of Painters, of Pontiac. In 1940, he was asked to fill out a questionnaire with data for preparation of a personal sketch to be printed in "Who's Who," published by the A. N. Marquis Co., of Chicago. He chose to decline the invitation.

Thomas F. Googerty Left Most of his Estate to the Pontiac Catholic Church

Thomas F. Googerty never married and he was the last living survivor of his family. He left most of his estate to the Pontiac Catholic Church per the Daily Leader article below.

> Pontiac Daily Leader
> November 15, 1945
>
> **St. Mary Church Main Beneficiary of Googerty Will**
>
> St. Mary Catholic church is the main beneficiary named in the will of the late Thomas F. Googerty, Pontiac, which has been filed for probate in the office of the county clerk.
>
> Several cousins and friends of Mr. Googerty will receive gifts ranging from one hundred to one thousand dollars. Under terms of the will, St. James hospital will receive $1,000.
>
> The remainder of the estate, estimated to be in excess of $100,000 is to go to St. Mary church, the principal to be kept intact, and the interest from the principal to be used for the upkeep of the church. Assets of the estate, which were being assessed this afternoon were said to be farm lands, stocks, bonds, and Pontiac real estate.
>
> Mr. Googerty's will was made July 13, 1932, and H. H. Smith and Ella Scanlon were named executors. The latter is now deceased.

Comments on the Estate Value of Thomas F. Googerty

A $100,000 estate in 1945 would be equivalent to $1,775,125 in 2024 dollars. Apparently the investments he inherited from his brother Andrew Googerty did very well between Andrew's death in 1916 and 1945 when Thomas died!

This was a very substantial estate to leave to the Pontiac Catholic church.

Mr. Googerty’s Iron Pieces go Missing after His Death

The 1999 Googerty Memphis Exhibit Pamphlet recounts that most of the items made by Thomas F. Googerty went missing after his death.

> Tom Googerty lives on in things, words, and memories. His historical presence is at once tangible and elusive, a mosaic of legacies lost and recovered, and puzzles yet unsolved.
>
> Most of his forge work has disappeared. The two hundred or so known pieces bearing his stamp are only a small and probably not very representative sample of the whole output of a long career. Several hundred more examples of his and his students' work are known today only from photographs and halftone illustrations in long-defunct magazines. Almost entirely unaccounted for are the large architectural pieces the Googerty shop produced for Illinois state agencies and municipalities. Exceptions include several ornamental gates and grilles still publicly accessible in the Pontiac area.
>
> The Googerty work that does survive in private hands almost all followed only a few lines of descent. During his lifetime Tom evidently sold only a few works, and only occasionally gave pieces to reformatory co-workers and Pontiac area friends. Over time these pieces passed on to other individuals, and in a few instances to public collections. Much of Googerty's favorite work, however, remained in his possession until he died in 1945.
>
> As Tom's executor broke up the rundown, cluttered household he discovered ironwork hidden everywhere, tucked in mattresses and upholstery stuffing and concealed under loose floor boards. Systematic ransacking eventually uncovered a lifetime horde of creative work stashed away in oily rags. Tom had always been modestly mindful of history's judgment, but he had also been a little eccentric. He evidently had believed that hiding his treasures at home was the best way to preserve them for the Art Institute.
>
> It remains unclear why only part of Googerty's bequest ever reached its destination. In 1947 the Art Institute did accession nineteen stunning pieces and a portfolio of Googerty drawings and photographs. In 1959 it sold all but three of its Googerty objects to Chicago area dealers, and in

1999 donated its remaining Googerty ironwork to the National Ornamental Metal Museum in Memphis, Tennessee. For the most part, however, Googerty's fugitive works left only faint traces or cold trails. The present exhibition represents the largest single body of his work yet assembled for public view.

Even more elusive than Googerty objects are the dozens, perhaps hundreds of unknown young inmates whose imaginations he once fired in the blaze of his forge. Was a stint in Googerty's unlikely atelier a passing episode or a life-changing experience? How many of his students pursued their new-found trade after their release? How many, if only on their own time and for their own pleasure, produce a second generation of Googerty inspired ornamental metal work?

Comments on the Missing Googerty Made Pieces

Based upon the author's limited family experience, it is not unusual for personal possessions to be taken from the house of the deceased with or without the Executor's permission.

It seems a little strange that only 19 of maybe 100+ items made it to the Chicago Art Institute as Thomas F. Googerty desired. It is unfortunate that these many items did not make it to the Art Institute for safekeeping.

CHAPTER 12

1999

Special Thomas F. Googerty Exhibition at the National Ornamental Museum in Memphis

The Memphis Sun newspaper ran an article on April 18, 1999, which announced this museum would have a special Thomas Googerty display from April 25, 1999 until July 3, 1999.

The Memphis Sun newspaper
April 18, 1999

Works by blacksmith going on display at Memphis museum

"Forging Character, Forging Iron: The Work of Thomas F. Googerty" will go on view on April 25 at the National Ornamental Metal Museum in Memphis. Sponsored by The City of Pontiac, Ill.; The Illinois Valley Blacksmiths' Association, and The River Valley Bluff Forge Council, the exhibit will remain at the metal museum through July 3.

In the mid-1890s, Francis Googerty (1864-1945) was born in Pontiac to recent immigrant Irish parents. When his father died at an early age, Googerty apprenticed to a local blacksmith while still a teenager.

In the early 1880s, Googerty returned to Pontiac, where for nearly 40 years he taught blacksmithing to young inmates at the Illinois State Reformatory. Many of his students were black.

While serving as a teacher, he was also an active artist-craftsman exhibiting throughout the U.S., including annual exhibitions at the Art Institute of Chicago. In 1915, Googerty and his students won a gold medal for ornamental iron-work at the Panama-Pacific Exposition in San Francisco.

In 1920 and 1921, his work was part of a traveling exhibition which was seen in art museums in Milwaukee, Detroit, Buffalo, Baltimore, Kansas City and St. Louis. Among his many honors was election as craftsman member of the prestigious Society of Arts and Crafts in Boston.

Unlike most of the production blacksmiths of his day, Googerty never had a commercial shop, nor did he seek major commissions that would have brought him more fame.

Instead, he transformed the reformatory shop into a classic atelier (a workshop or studio, especially one used by an artist or designer), where he conveyed life skills and artistic vision to generations of students.

Googerty's notion of teaching extended beyond how to do your work to how to live your life. He believed that character, like iron, could be forged. In addition to hands-on teaching at the reformatory, Googerty reached a much wider audience with his publications.

His beautifully illustrated books continue to influence American blacksmithing today through reprinted editions. "Hand Forging and Wrought-Iron Ornamental Work," published in 1911, includes 122 illustrations by Googerty, a master draftsman as well as author.

A rich legacy of objects survive Googerty, and some 70 examples will comprise the exhibition. One, an oil portrait of Googerty by a Pontiac dentist, Thomas Lockie, has just been restored by the conservator at the Pink Palace Museum.

Many of the works are coming from the extensive collection of Dr. Howard S. Miller, a Googerty scholar and professor of history emeritus, University of Missouri-St. Louis. Miller, who has spent decades gathering information about Googerty, is curator of the exhibition.

The exhibition will feature three Googerty works recently donated by the Art Institute of Chicago to the permanent collection of the National Ornamental Museum.

Perhaps the most important objects in the exhibition are a pair of cemetery gates lent by the City of Pontiac. Other objects include lamps, door hardware, candle holders, a crucifix, repousse boxes, several pieces of jewelry, and hammer-formed vessels in copper and silver.

Thomas Googerty's artistic work became a vehicle for his social work as a teacher. If one considers that the decorative arts are created with the goal of enhancing our living environment, the contributions of Thomas F. Googerty deserve recognition. By tracing the influences of this reform-minded man, the exhibition will explore the varied and often overlooked channels of art and artisanship which have sustained and enriched American culture.

The Metal Museum is open Tuesday through Saturday from 10 each morning until 5 each afternoon, and on Sundays from noon to 5. Admission is $3 for adults and $2 for persons 62 years old and up, and for students. Admission is free to members and children under the age of five.

First floor galleries, restrooms, the gift store, smithy and grounds are handicapped accessible. Tours are available Tuesday through Friday by appointment, and may be scheduled by calling 901-774-6380. The National Ornamental Metal Museum is located at 374 Metal Museum Drive in Memphis.

Comments on the Newspaper Announcement of the Special Googerty Exhibit

This newspaper article was likely written by Professor Howard S. Miller. In the article, he used some terms that this author is not familiar with:

Atelier	A workshop or studio, especially one used by an artist or designer.
Repousse Box	A repoussé box is a decorative box, often made of metal, featuring a raised, three-dimensional design created through the repoussé technique. This technique involves hammering and shaping the metal from the back, pushing it outwards to form the design on the front. The result is a raised relief, where the design stands out from the surface of the box.

Special Brochure about the Memphis Museum Exhibition

For this special exhibition, Howard S. Miller created a 39 page pamphlet titled ***Forging Character, Forging Iron: The Work of Thomas F. Googerty.***

A copy of this 1999 brochure was obtained by the Livingston County [Illinois] Historical Society and is currently in the archive collection.

In this pamphlet, Mr. Miller thanked various people from Pontiac who shared their homes, memories, and Googerty treasures. These people included the late Elizabeth "Betty" Harris, Jim Pearre, Diane DeRocher, John and Nancy Dargan, John Perring, Bob Sear, Jim and Jane Scouller, Mike Ingles, Dick and Kay Thompson, Joan and Ed Lipinski, Richard Oughton, Anne Williams, Frank Giovanini, Mary Fasnacht, Josie Bentley, Mike Burke, Bill Spaniol, Brad Brinegar, and especially Merle and Barbara Glick.

Mr. Miller also thanked Richard Carr for restoring the Pontiac cemetery gates and Jim Buonaccorsi for installing them in the exhibit.

Googerty Exhibit to Be at Peoria Museum after Memphis Exhibit

On February 25, 1999, the Daily Leader ran an article stating that Livingston County residents would not have to travel all the way to Memphis to see the special Thomas F. Googerty exhibit.

> After the Googerty exhibit was conducted from April 25 to July 3 in Memphis, the Lakeview Museum of Arts and Sciences in Peoria would then show the same exhibit from August 7 to October 17.

Googerty Exhibit to be at Pontiac after the Peoria Museum

A June 10, 1999, Daily Leader article explained how the exhibit would visit Pontiac after it finished in Peoria.

> Pontiac Daily Leader
> By John Faddoul Staff Reporter
> June 10, 1999
>
> **Pontiac Resident Visits Googerty Exhibition**
>
> As the exhibit on Thomas F. Googerty concludes its run at a Memphis museum, planning continues for a Pontiac showing of many of the works displayed there, as well as others owned by local residents and not shown at Memphis.
>
> Ironwork of the Pontiac native and his students, on exhibit at the National Ornamental Metal Museum in Memphis from April 25- July 3, will be displayed at the Yost House Museum and at the Bank of Pontiac starting Nov. 7. Works by Googerty (1864- 1945) and his Pontiac reformatory students is a centerpiece exhibit celebrating the 20th anniversary year of the museum, the country's only museum dedicated exclusively to the collection and exhibition of metalwork.
>
> Included in the exhibit are the city's South Side Cemetery gates, which were restored by museum staff. The Lakeview Museum of Arts and Sciences in Peoria will be the site for the second showing of the exhibit, from July 30 through Oct. 30. For the items to be exhibited here, current plans are for the Bank of Pontiac to display items on loan from out-of-town residents, while the Yost Museum will show pieces owned by Pontiac-area people.
>
> Some of those will have been shown at the museums, but others will be on loan from local residents who were unwilling to have them displayed at Memphis.

Hours for the displays at the Yost Museum and the bank remain to be set, said Laura Sellmyer, president of the Livingston County Historical Society.

The Yost exhibit will close about the end of November because of Christmas displays, while the exhibit at the bank is open-ended at this point.

Additional hours are likely at the Yost Museum for those wanting to see the decorative and functional ironwork made by Googerty and his reform-school students.

Sellmyer and Jennifer Zang, curator at the Yost Museum, on April 25 attended the opening reception for the Memphis exhibit, titled "Forging Iron, Forging Character: The Work of Thomas F. Googerty." Exhibition sponsors include the city, of Pontiac, the Illinois Valley Blacksmith's Association and James Pearce, former publisher of the Daily Leader.

Several members of the blacksmiths' group removed the cemetery gates in February and took them to Memphis for restoration and now display as part of the exhibit.

The two large traffic gates arc now on display outside the front of the museum, and the two, smaller pedestrian gates are at the top of a stairway leading to the second floor of the museum.

The blacksmiths will be back in Pontiac this Friday through Sunday' for the second biannual Upper Midwest Regional Conference of a national blacksmith's association. Several hundred blacksmiths, from Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin and Indiana, are expected to attend the event at Thresherman's Park.

Steve "Rainbo" Clary of Decatur, association president, said in February that the blacksmiths are extending a special invitation to anyone who knew Googerty or owns his or his students' work to come out and visit them.

On the grounds of the Memphis museum is a workshop where the cemetery gates underwent a restoration before becoming a centerpiece of the Googerty exhibit. "They've been beautifully restored by the blacksmiths working at the museum," Sellmyer said. "They've done a beautiful job."

The entire exhibit impressed Sellmyer, who admired expertly crafted iron objects like lamps, door knockers and fireplace equipment, and she found

herself admiring as well the craftsmanship of the blacksmiths who produced them.

Curator of the Memphis exhibit is Pontiac native, Googerty scholar and retired history professor Howard S. Miller. He gave an informal gallery talk at the opening reception, Sellmyer recalled, which focused on Googerty's 30-plus years of teaching at the Pontiac reformatory that later became the Pontiac Correctional Center.

Sellmyer said she found herself impressed with Googerty's choice to stay in Pontiac, instead of working at a more nationally recognized level. To have "a national display of a man who lived here in Pontiac," where some still-living residents knew him, also impressed her, she said.

Miller in his talk noted that many Pontiac residents during Googerty's time, and some today, still don't know they had a nationally famous artist in their midst.

Sixty-four Googerty objects are displayed at the National Ornamental Metal Museum, and museum Director James A. Wallace said, "We've had excellent crowds," including visitors from out of state and around the country who came to visit the exhibit. Orders for the exhibit catalog are strong, he said.

"It's a story that needs to be told," Wallace said of the work of Googerty in teaching troubled youths a useful trade as a means of reforming their lives. "We've been looking forward to doing it for a long, long time."

While many of the items on display at the Memphis museum are listed as from private collections, several are from local sources. A toasting fork and andirons are from the collection of John G. and Nancy C. Dargan. Two bronze foundry figures from 1920 are from the collection of Frank Giovanini, and a wrought iron table lamp with art glass, from about 1915, is from the Livingston County Historical Society.

When Pontiac stages its exhibit of Googerty work, it will include a fireplace screen made for the Smith family and pieces owned by Owen Lyons which once hung on the altar and wall at St. Mary's Church. Besides working with wrought iron and metals, Googerty also was a painter, and landscapes by him are on display at the Yost Museum and Jones House in Pontiac. A portrait of Googerty by Catherine Yost is currently on display at the Yost Museum, and the county historical society also has a copy of one of Googerty's books, "Decorative Wrought Iron Works," which he personally inscribed to Yost.

CHAPTER 13

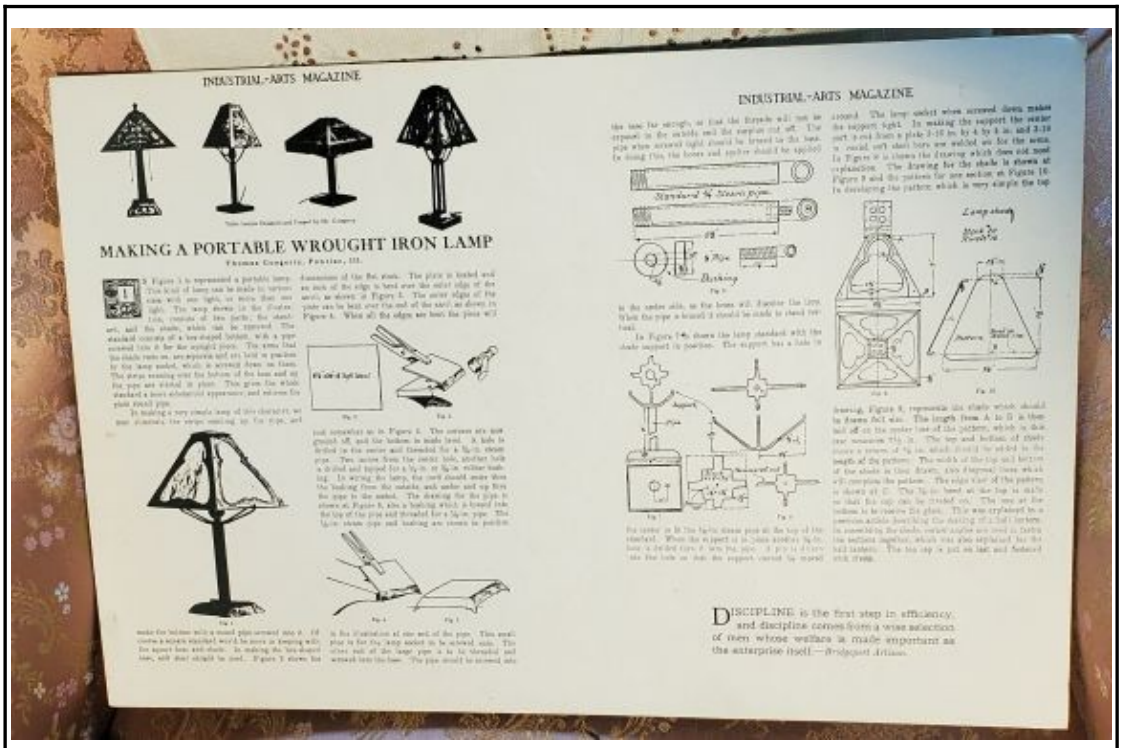
Googerty Items in the Artifact Collection of the Livingston County Historical Society

The items below are displayed in the historic Jones House on Madison Street in Pontiac as of June 30, 2025. There are fourteen paintings done by Thomas F. Googerty.

This fireplace was made by Thomas F. Googerty or his students at the Boys Reformatory in Pontiac. It originally had a screen riveted to the iron frame, but the screen is gone. The screen was likely burned up by the constant exposure to hot sparks.

The fireplace screen has a squirrel eating a nut on each side of the screen.

Lamp made by Thomas F. Googerty or his students, circa 1915.


INDUSTRIAL-ARTS MAGAZINE

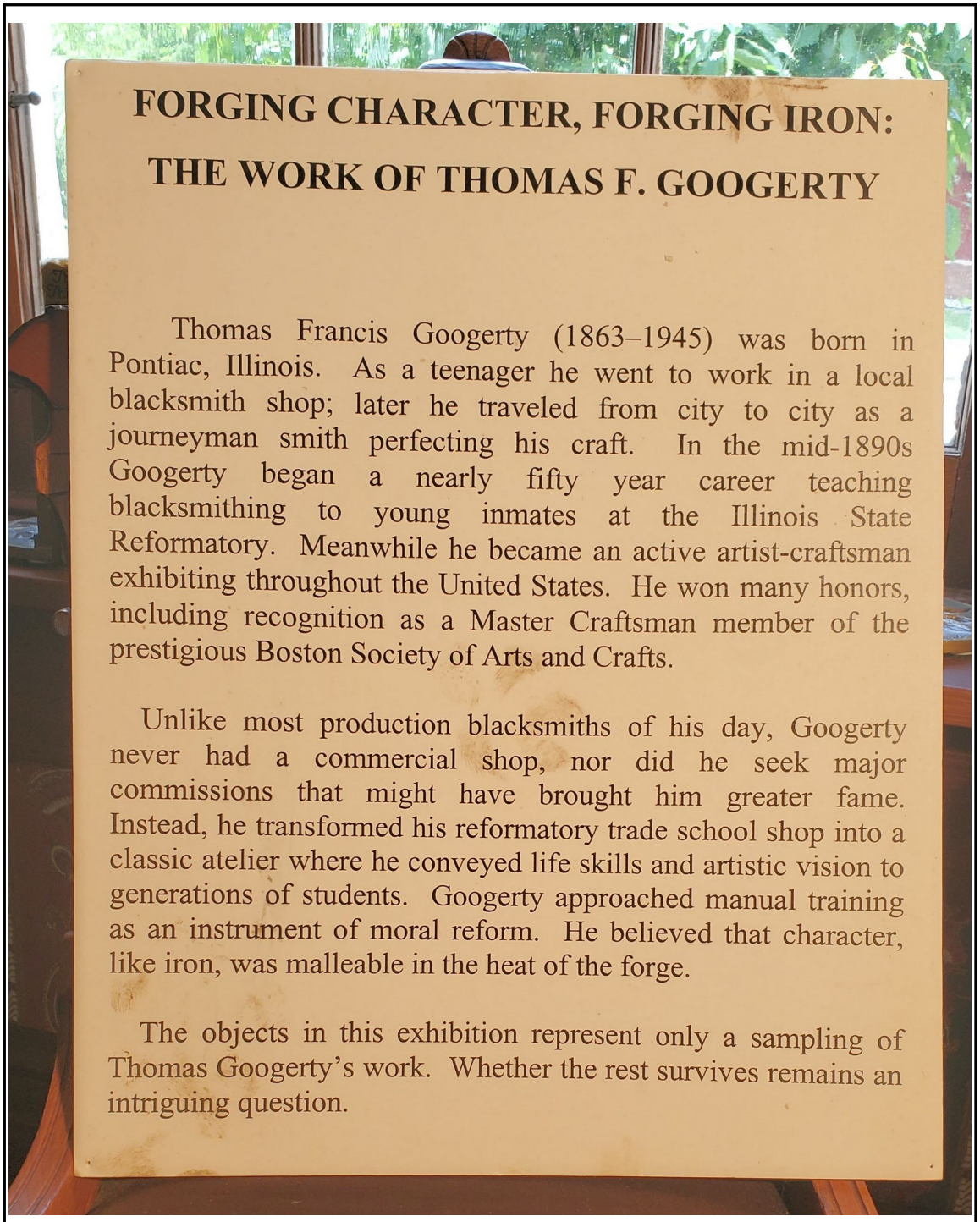
MAKING A PORTABLE WROUGHT IRON LAMP

Thomas Googerty, Peoria, Ill.

INDUSTRIAL-ARTS MAGAZINE

DISCIPLINE is the first step in efficiency, and discipline comes from a wise selection of men whose welfare is made important as the enterprise itself.—*Bridgeport Artisan.*

An article written by Thomas F. Googerty displayed on a poster board at the Jones House on how to make lamps.


FORGING CHARACTER, FORGING IRON:
THE WORK OF THOMAS F. GOOGERTY
Thomas Francis Googerty (1863–1945) was born in Pontiac, Illinois. As a teenager he went to work in a local blacksmith shop; later he traveled from city to city as a journeyman smith perfecting his craft. In the mid-1890s Googerty began a nearly fifty year career teaching blacksmithing to young inmates at the Illinois State Reformatory. Meanwhile he became an active artist-craftsman exhibiting throughout the United States. He won many honors, including recognition as a Master Craftsman member of the prestigious Boston Society of Arts and Crafts.
Unlike most production blacksmiths of his day, Googerty never had a commercial shop, nor did he seek major commissions that might have brought him greater fame. Instead, he transformed his reformatory trade school shop into a classic atelier where he conveyed life skills and artistic vision to generations of students. Googerty approached manual training as an instrument of moral reform. He believed that character, like iron, was malleable in the heat of the forge.
The objects in this exhibition represent only a sampling of Thomas Googerty's work. Whether the rest survives remains an intriguing question.

A poster board display using information from the 1999 Googerty exhibit in Memphis pamphlet.

An ornamental iron lamp made by Thomas F. Googerty or his students.

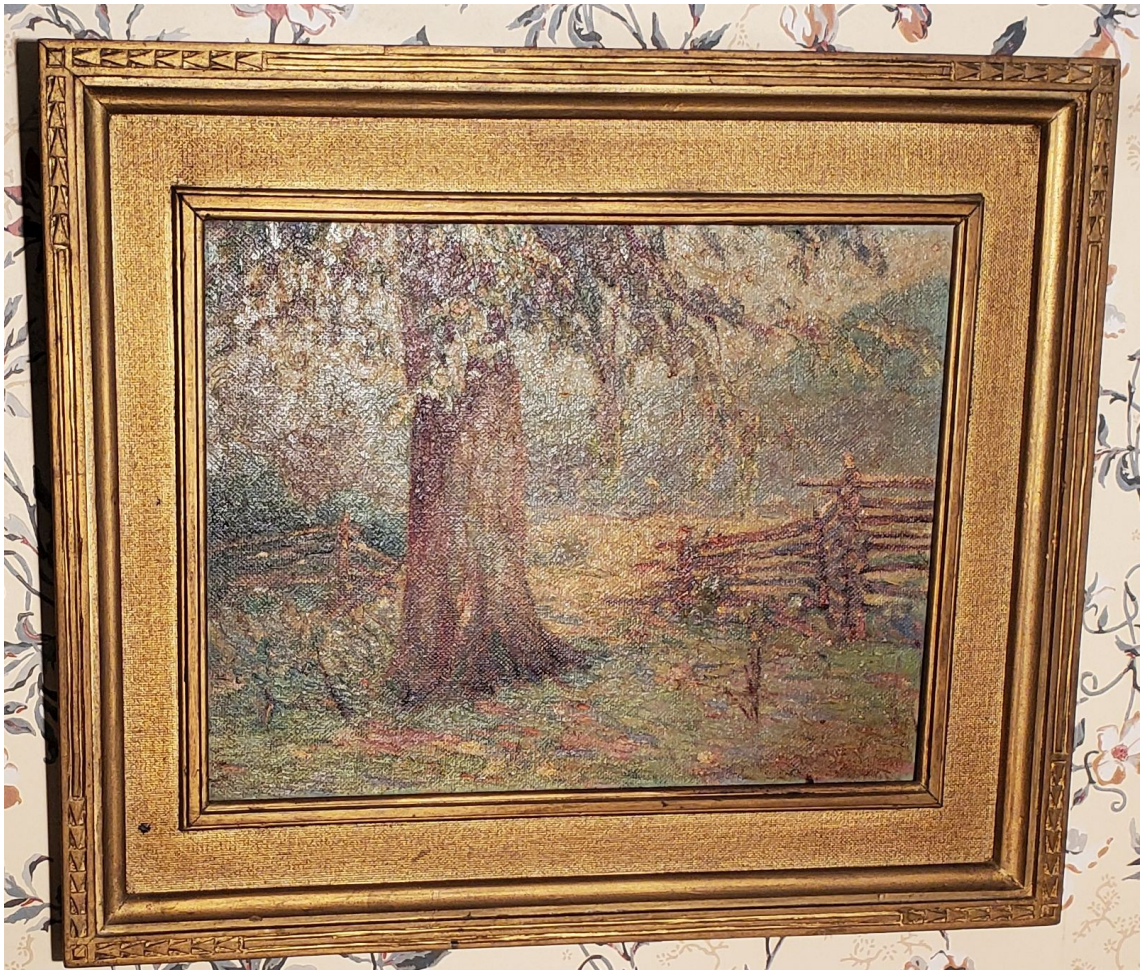
1930 Painting by Thomas F. Googerty titled Sunlight - Mackinaw River

River scene painting by Thomas F. Googerty

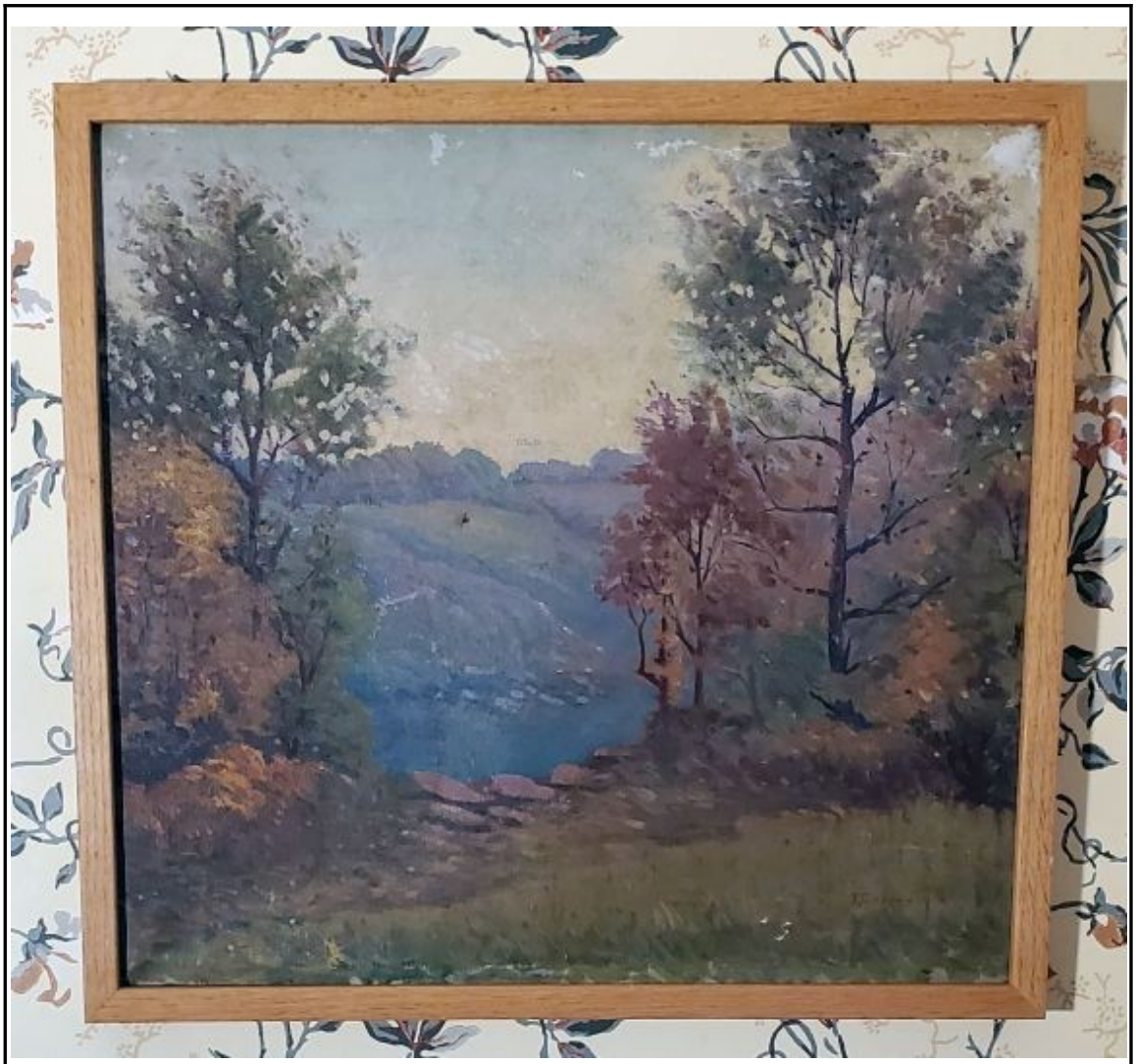
Painting by Thomas F. Googerty

Painting by Thomas F. Googerty

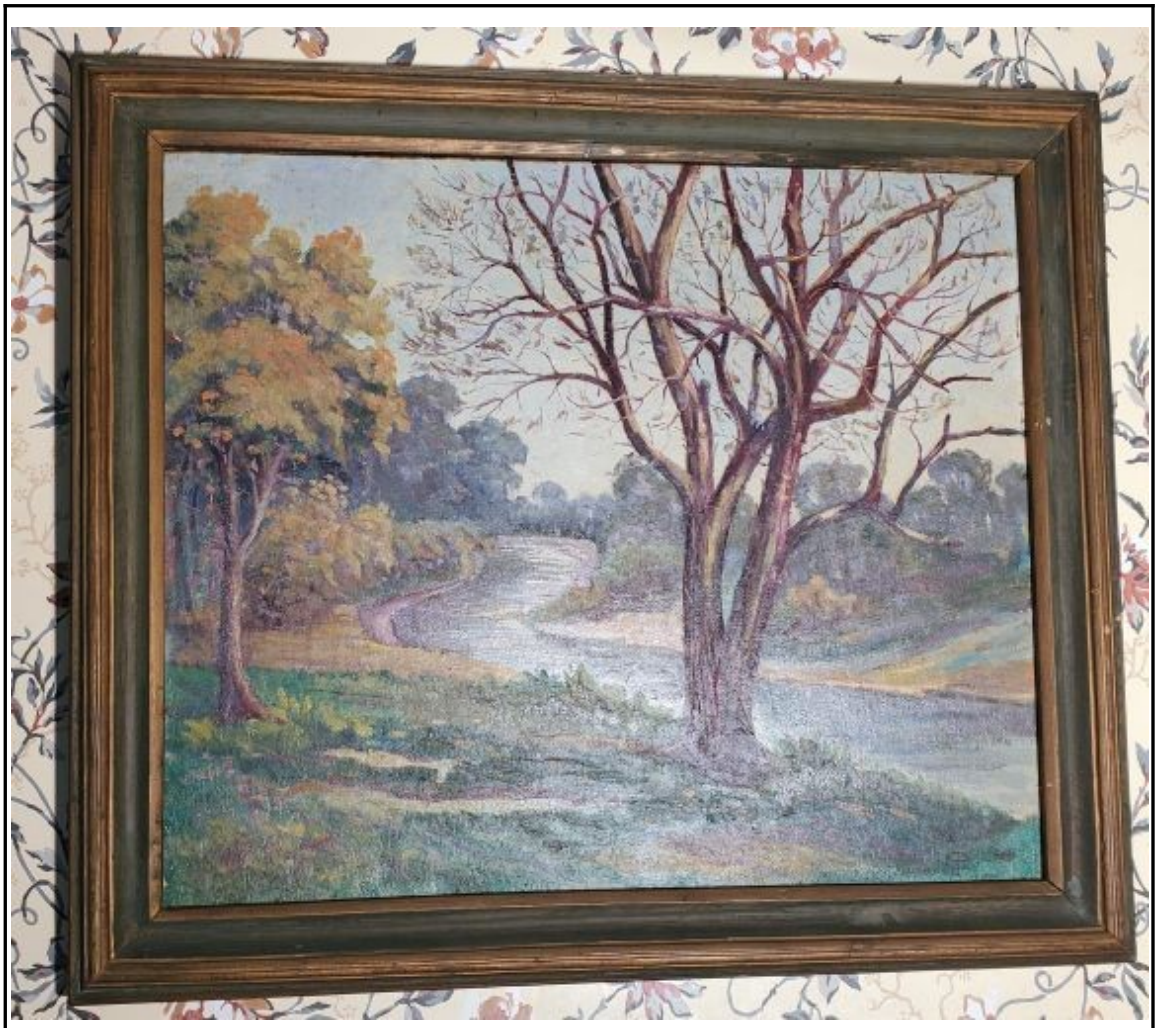
Painting by Thomas F. Googerty



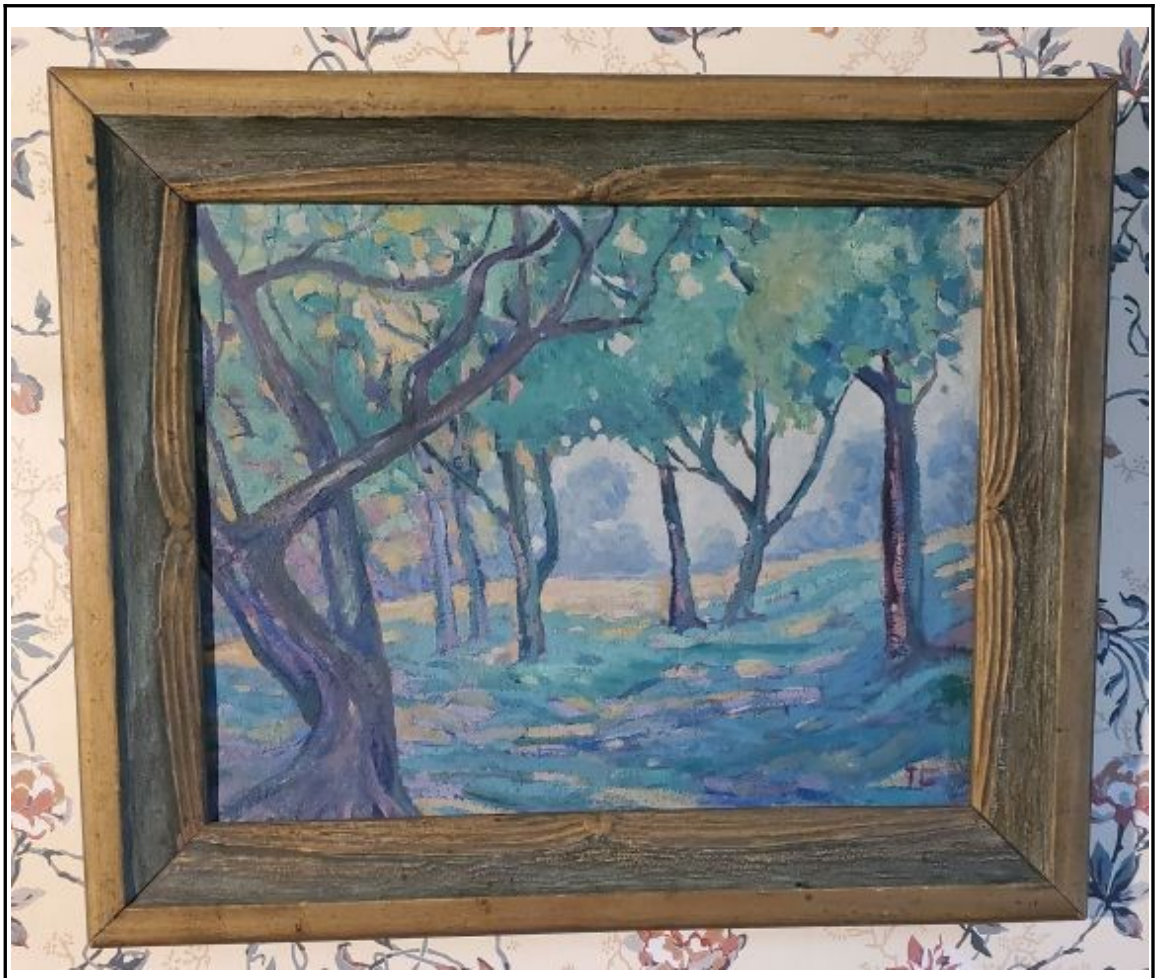
Painting by Thomas F. Googerty



River scene painting by Googerty



Painting by Thomas F. Googerty

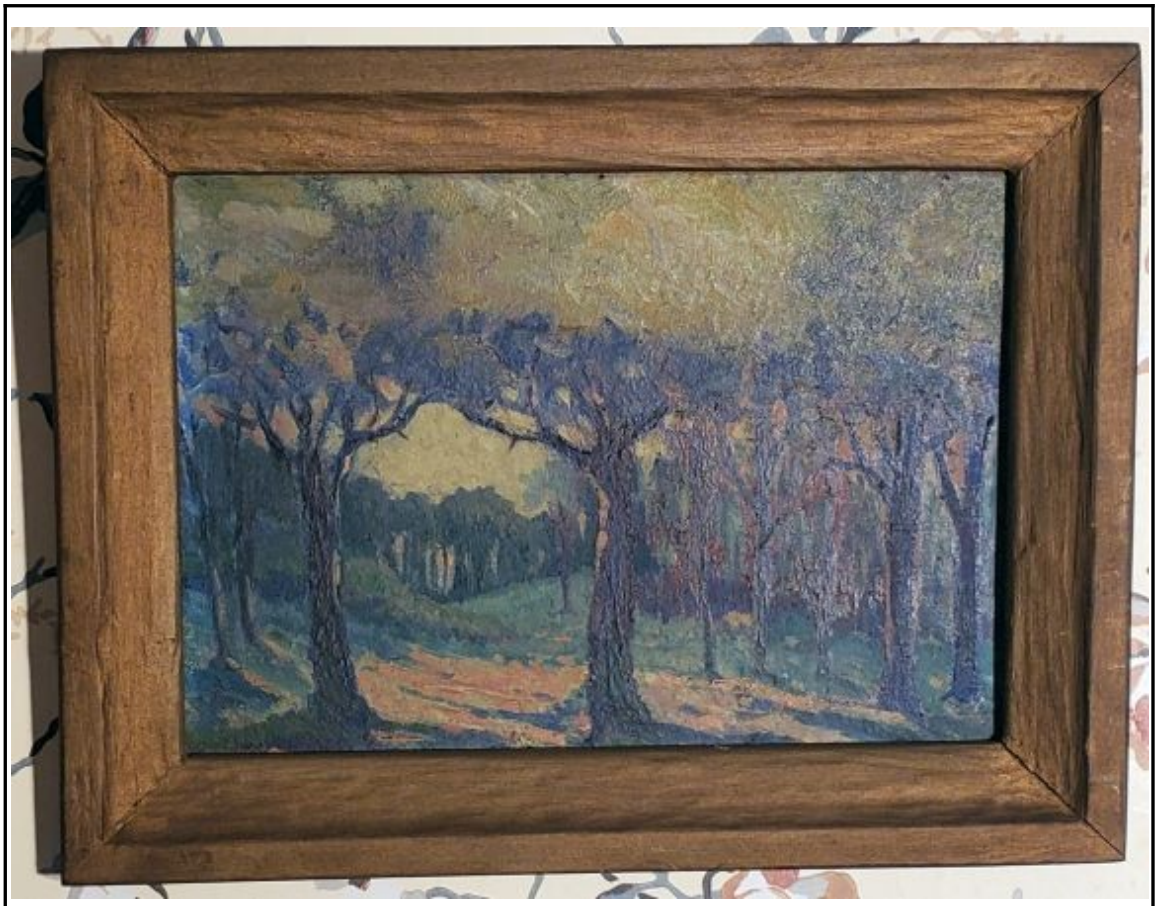


Painting by Thomas F. Googerty

Painting by Thomas F. Googerty

Painting by Thomas F. Googerty

1940 Thomas F. Googerty painting titled "Desolation". Painted on the Husted Farm 2 miles south of Cornell, Illinois. Buildings built in 1890.



Painting by Thomas F. Googerty.

Painted portrait of Thomas F. Googerty by Dr. Thomas Lockie.

CHAPTER 14

Unsolved Mysteries

Whenever historical research is performed, there are always mysteries that arise. The story of the Googerty family has it's fair share of mysteries.

Who Was the Wife of William Googerty (1800-1873)?

Margaret Googerty's maiden name is not known at this time. Her date of death is also not known.

There are Pontiac newspaper records of her paying property taxes for a lot or house in the Fell Addition in Pontiac in 1889. That year is the last mention of her name in the Pontiac newspapers.

Unfortunately, the 1890 U.S. Census records were all destroyed by a fire, and are not available. She does not show up in the 1900 Census when she would have been about 85 years old. It is likely she died sometime between 1889 and 1900.

She was likely buried in St. Mary's cemetery in Pontiac. Burial records may exist that might show when she died.

It is also very strange that Bridget Googerty, sister of William Googerty (1800-1873) is shown on his gravestone, but his wife Margaret Googerty's name is not the stone?

Who Were the Parents of Bridget Googerty and William Googerty (1800-1873)?

Their parents probably lived and died in Ireland. It is notoriously difficult to research family genealogy in Ireland unless you know both the County name and the church name. Some of the key census records were lost when the paper was converted to wood pulp for the World War I effort.

Date and Cause of Death for William Googerty (1829-1869)?

The 1909 Volume II history book recounts that he was killed in some type of railroad incident in Pontiac. Son Andrew Googerty's 1917 obituary recounts that his father died 48 years before 1917, which was 1869.

It would be interesting to confirm the year of his death and also more information about the accident that caused his death.

Were There Living Relatives in Elgin, Illinois?

The 1909 Volume II history book recounts that Thomas F. Googerty's grandfather moved his family from Elgin down to Pontiac in 1850.

There is a newspaper article stating that Thomas F. Googerty, as an adult man, visited relatives in Elgin. The article did not mention the name of the relatives.

Using the FindaGrave website, nobody with the surname of Googerty is buried in Kane County, where Elgin is located. It could be that Thomas F. Googerty visited relatives from his grandmother's side of the family, but her maiden name is unknown.

A Daily Leader article mentioned that Thomas F. Googerty left money to some cousins. It is possible the names of some relatives might be in the Will of Thomas F. Googerty.

In What Towns Did Thomas F. Googerty Work between 1880 and 1894?

In the 1880 Census, he reported that he lived in Pontiac and was apprenticed to a blacksmith. In 1894, he accepted the job as an instructor at the Boys Reformatory in Pontiac.

Many people report that Thomas F. Googerty traveled around and worked as a blacksmith during this 14 year period between 1880 and 1894. It would be interesting to know what type of work he did and where he worked. It is likely that what he learned during this period heavily influenced the designs he developed for ornamental iron items.

What Happened to All the Googerty Made Items After He Died in 1945?

Thomas F. Googerty stashed possibly 100 different items in house that he had made during his lifetime. Only 19 items made it from his house to the Chicago Art Institute.

It would be interesting to know what happened to all these items made by Thomas F. Googerty.

What Ever Happened to the Poorbox that Googerty made for the Pontiac St. Mary's Catholic Church?

According to the 1999 Googerty Memphis Exhibit Pamphlet, Thomas F. Googerty made a poorbox for his Pontiac Catholic Church around 1920.

> The most elaborate display of Googerty's own work was a twenty-piece exhibit that visited the Milwaukee, Buffalo, Detroit, St. Louis, and Kansas City municipal art museums in the winter of 1920-1921.
>
> Visitors especially appreciated the wrought iron and brass Gothic style cathedral poorbox he had made for his Pontiac parish church. Tom regarded it as his masterpiece.

According to the pamphlet, Thomas Googerty regarded this poorbox as his masterpiece.

The author toured the Catholic Church in Pontiac in June of 2025, but the poorbox could not be found in the main sanctuary area, or to the room on the east side of the main sanctuary.

Further research is planned to determine if this poorbox still exists at the Catholic Church in Pontiac, or if any photographs of it still exist. If it still exists, it would be very interesting to display this Poor Box in the new Thomas F. Googerty room in the historic Strevell House in Pontiac.

Did Thomas F. Googerty Design the Image of Chief Pontiac Used on the Monument on the Southeast Lawn of the old Livingston County Courthouse?

The Livingston County Historical Society had this stone arched monument built in 1936.

At the top of the bronze plaque is an image of Chief Pontiac. The plaque was made by L. C. Stephenson, who was in charge of the Foundry Department at the Boys Reformatory in Pontiac. Mr. Stephenson's name appears as L. C. Stephenson on the plaque.

Since Mr. Stephenson worked with Thomas F. Googerty, it is possible that Mr. Googerty designed the image of Chief Pontiac used on this plaque. At this time, no documentation can be found which substantiates that Thomas F. Googerty was involved with the design or manufacturing of this plaque.

CHAPTER 15

2025

New Thomas F. Googerty Display Room in the Strevell House in Pontiac

Most of the artifacts associated with Thomas F. Googerty held by the Livingston County Historical Society are in the historic Jones House in Pontiac, Illinois. These include about six artifacts made by Thomas F. Googerty or his students. There are also approximately 14 paintings either painted by Thomas F. Googerty or someone made a painting of him. There are also a few artifacts at the historic Catherine Yost Museum in Pontiac.

The Livingston County Historical Society is planning to dedicate one upstairs bedroom at the Strevell House to a Thomas F. Googerty permanent exhibit. The Society is planning on consolidating most of the Googerty related artifacts into this new exhibit room.

It is extremely difficult to find or buy any iron artifacts made by Thomas F. Googerty or his students at the Boys Reformatory. One option the Society is investigating is converting some of his designs from his books into 3D printed items for display.

Availability of Thomas F. Googerty Books

As of June of 2025, all three of the books written by Thomas F. Googerty can be purchased from Amazon.com as reprints of the original books. These include the 1911, 1915, and 1937 books authored by him.

Used copies of these books can be purchased from various Internet book companies.

Archive.Org is a large non-profit that allows users to permanently store rare documents on their website. Researchers can find these documents using Google searches. Usually the documents are in a PDF format which can be viewed or downloaded.

The 1911 and 1915 Googerty authored books are available from Archive.Org. The 1937 book has not been digitized at this time.

Howard S. Miller grew up in Pontiac and he met Thomas F. Googerty when Howard was a child. Howard researched the life of Thomas F. Googerty and published a 39-page pamphlet for the 1999 Googerty exhibit at the Memphis National Ornamental Metal Museum. This pamphlet is well very written and contains a lot of Googerty history and photos of items produced by him or his students.

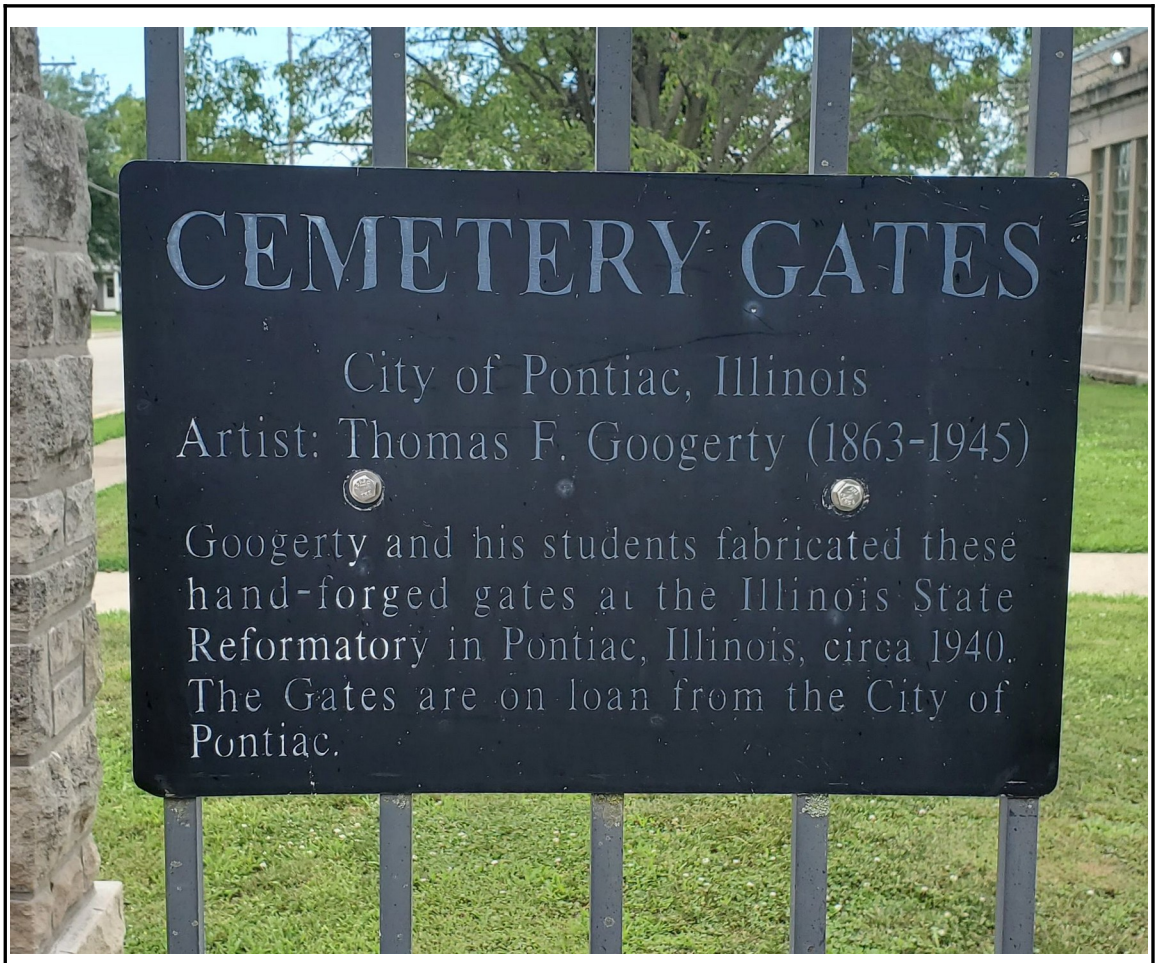
No source could be found to purchase paper reprints of this 1999 pamphlet. The author scanned and uploaded this document to Archive.Org so future researchers can access it.

The website tinyurl.com was used to shorten the Internet address where these documents can be viewed or downloaded from Archive.Org as shown in the table below.

Author	Year	Title	Reprints Available	Address to Download PDF
Thomas F. Googerty	1911	Hand Forging and Wrought-Iron Ornamental Work	Yes	https://tinyurl.com/3eje8her
Thomas F. Googerty	1915	Practical Forging and Art Smithing	Yes	https://tinyurl.com/kvkw7ka5
Thomas F. Googerty	1937	Decorative Wrought Iron Works	Yes	NA
Howard S. Miller	1999	Forging Iron, Forging Character: The Work of Thomas F. Googerty	No	https://tinyurl.com/y45p7sy4

Googerty Iron Gates Still in Service at Pontiac's Southside Cemetery

Photos of the gates were taken by the author in June of 2025. These photos are shown below.


CEMETERY GATES
City of Pontiac, Illinois
Artist: Thomas F. Googerty (1863-1945)
Googerty and his students fabricated these hand-forged gates at the Illinois State Reformatory in Pontiac, Illinois, circa 1940. The Gates are on loan from the City of Pontiac.

Sign on the north half of the gate at Southside Cemetery

North half of the iron gate at Southside Cemetery

South half of iron entrance gates at Southside Cemetery

Ornamental detail in top middle of south half of the gate.

Another ornamental detail on the south half of the gate.

Googerty Ornamental Gates Still in Service at St. Mary's Catholic Cemetery in Pontiac

Gate at St. Mary's Catholic Cemetery in Pontiac

Detail of top of north half of gate.

South half of the gate at St. Mary's Catholic Cemetery in Pontiac

North half of the gate at St. Mary's Catholic Cemetery in Pontiac

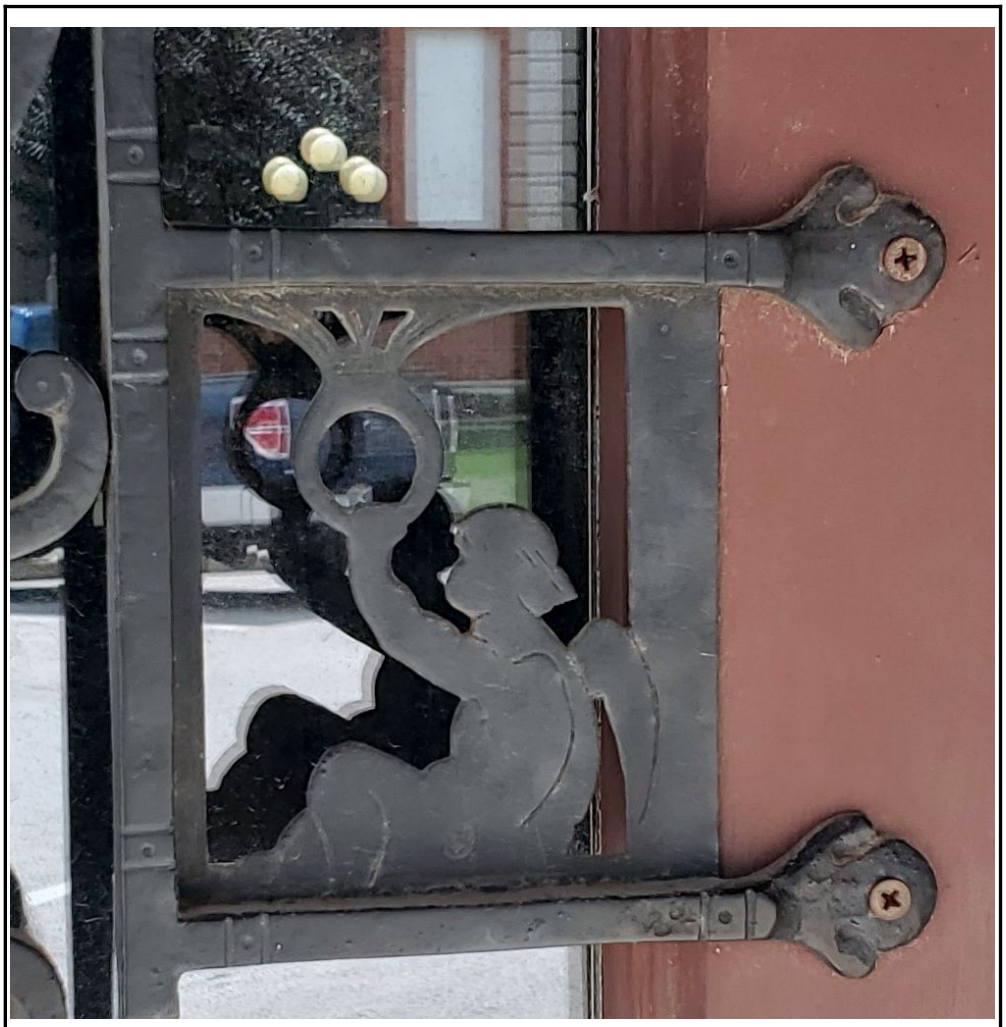
Detail in the middle-center of the two gates.

Googerty Iron Protective Door Grille on Smith Jewelry in Pontiac

It is reported that Thomas F. Googerty made the protective iron door grille on what was the Smith Jewelry store in Pontiac at 117 West Madison Street, just across the street north of the Old Courthouse. The business is now named Jurassic Gemstones.

Black iron protective grille on the front door of Jurassic Gemstones

Portion of iron protective grille on the door. The S in the center stood for Smith Jewelry store. It is believed Googerty also built the fireplace screen with an "S" in the center for the Smith family of Pontiac.



Detail on the right-hand center of the Googerty door grille.

Googerty Fireplace Screen in New Googerty Room Exhibition in the Strevell House

Googerty made the iron fireplace screen in front of a mock fireplace in the Googerty room in the Strevell House. It is believed the "S" in the center of the screen is for the Smith Family that owned the Smith Jewelry store. Googerty's stamping mark he used to mark his hand-made items is on the center of the mock fireplace.

Chapter 16

Closing Thoughts

The Googerty family were pioneer settlers of Pontiac with William Googerty (1800-1870) arriving in 1850 before the railroad came through in 1854.

Thomas F. Googerty was born and raised in Pontiac. He went on to become a nationally known figure in the ornamental iron field. Thomas authored over 50 magazine articles about forging and ornament iron working, as well as three books. His 1911 book is still referred to by modern blacksmiths.

With his students, Thomas F. Googerty designed and built the iron gates at the Pontiac Southside Cemetery and the St. Mary's Cemetery. These gates are still in use today.

Thomas F. Googerty was one of the founders of the Amitytown Painters Society. At least thirteen of his paintings still survive today in the archives of the Livingston County Historical Society.

It is hoped this book will help to inform future generations about the history of the Googerty family and the national prominence of Thomas F. Googerty.

References

All references used in this story were identified at the point they were used in the story.

Recommended Reading

Abraham Lincoln and the Strevell Family of Pontiac, Illinois by Dale C. Maley.

The Story of the Jones House in Pontiac, Illinois, by Dale C. Maley.

The Zoath Yost Family of Pontiac, Illinois by Dale C. Maley.

Websites

Most of the rare documents found in doing research for this book were uploaded to Archive.Org. One can search that website using the search term “Pontiac + Illinois” to find these documents. All documents may be viewed or downloaded from this website.

Author Spotlight

Dale C. Maley

One of Dale's hobbies is history, including the history of Fairbury, Illinois. Dale has written over 26 books on Fairbury and Livingston County history. He has also written over 350 history stories for the Fairbury Blade newspaper and FairburyNews.Net. He has given many history lectures to various community groups in Livingston, McLean, and Ford Counties. Dale is President of the Livingston County Historical Society and is President of the Fairbury Echoes Museum. Both Dale and his wife are 5th generation citizens of Fairbury.

Also by Dale C. Maley

Livingston County History Books

- Abraham Lincoln and the Strevell Family of Pontiac, Illinois
- Coal Mining in Fairbury, Illinois
- Fairbury History Stories: Volume One
- Fairbury History Stories: Volume Two
- Fairbury History Stories: Volume Three
- Fairbury History Stories: Volume Four
- Fairbury, Illinois Book Authors
- Fairbury, Illinois in 1888
- Fairbury, Illinois in the Civil War
- Fairbury, Illinois and the 1893 Chicago Columbian Exposition
- Fairbury, Illinois, from Prehistoric Times to Modern Times
- Fairbury, Illinois in the World Wars
- Franklin Oliver – Pioneer Settler of Livingston County, Illinois
- History of Murders Committed in Fairbury, Illinois
- Honeggers of Fairbury, Illinois
- Livingston County Historical Society: It's Beginning and Some Later Updates
- The Founding of Fairbury, Illinois
- The Goudy Brothers of Fairbury, Illinois

- The Great Chatsworth Train Wreck of 1887
- The Kring Family of Fairbury, Illinois
- The McDowell Family of Fairbury, Illinois
- The Massacre of the Nelson Buck Party from Pontiac, Illinois
- The Zoath Yost Family of Pontiac, Illinois
- Walton Bros. Of Fairbury, Illinois
- William T. Stackpole of Fairbury, Illinois
- William T. Stackpole's 1849 Journey from Illinois to the California Gold Fields